Interview with Elizabeth Moffat White

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Foreign Service Spouse Series

ELIZABETH MOFFAT WHITE

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi

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Q: This is Jewell Fenzi on Tuesday, July 26, 1988, I am interviewing Elizabeth Moffat White, Betty White, at my home in Washington. Mrs. White [at age 90] has come by bus from the Eastern Shore [of Maryland] this morning for the interview, and I am looking forward to talking to her about her husband's and her distinguished career from 1921, from Mrs. White's point of view, until the mid, late 1940s. Let's begin with the two women who had an enormous influence on your life.

WHITE: Yes, I was going to say that I first went to visit my brother, [Pierrepont Moffat] in Warsaw in 1920 with my mother as a young girl [of 22]. And the first person I met was the wife of the dean of the [diplomatic] corps, and she had a very great influence on me because she couldn't bear the country she was in. She couldn't say anything bad enough about it, whereas the country before that was quite nice. And then I was told that in the country before she was just as against that country. And I said, if I am ever going to be married to a diplomat, and I don't think I will be, I am going to enjoy the country while I am in it.

The other woman who had tremendous influence on me was an American woman who went to Venezuela with her husband, who was on a business trip. They went for two weeks and stayed six weeks, [and kept putting off coming home], and eventually stayed

for twenty-eight years. She had never learned Spanish, she had never settled, she had never lived. And so I said wherever I am I am going to dig in immediately, I shall start learning a language immediately, I shall get my house and start making it attractive immediately. Because even if you are only going to stay two years, at least you will have lived those two years.

Now of course when we were in the Foreign Service, the Foreign Service was very small. And we got to know each other very well, but we didn't see each other too often. We were more with the people of the country. If there was an American colony, we would see them too, but we would meet the people of the country.

For instance, in Argentina, I was so in the society that I never went with the other Americans to the night clubs and restaurants because the Argentine men there went with other women [not their wives], and therefore Argentine ladies could not go. And I was so in Argentine society that I didn't dare go. The Americans used to go there but actually, I didn't really care. During our fifth year there, the Argentines who had come back from Europe because they could no longer get their money out of Argentina, said if we must be exiled to this miserable town we'll have some night clubs, so overnight four or five night clubs sprang up, and those I went to because they were possible, everybody went to them. Although the Acci#n Cat#lica was very much against it.

Q: I was interested in a number of things, one of them was that you grew up in New York City, you went to Miss Chapin's. Was Miss Chapin's more than a finishing school?

WHITE: It started with kindergarten and I entered in the third grade, and the highest class was the eighth. In other words, I graduated in 1916, the first class to graduate was 1911, and it went straight up with me. I was just five years behind.

Q: Now was this progressive education for women in its day?

WHITE: No, no, it was not progressive. It was a good classical education. But she was very advanced in her ideas. She was the first person of that type of school to have sports. She had a real PhysEd teacher. When I first came there we had — what did she call it — we had to do elocution. We had to recite and do various other things, and we were told to put one heel in the hollow of the other foot, stand on the ball of your feet, and your hips would stick out, and chest come up which of course was good Edwardian practice, but I grew up in the time of Irene Castle, and the Debutante Slouch. So we would stick our hips out in the class, and then go slouching the rest of the time.

Then she got Miss Yates, the physical education teacher, that was in 1911-12, and my grandfather had died in November 1911, so my mother put me in a black dress. And I was 12, and it had a hobble skirt half-way down below the knee, it had a waist, and it had kimono sleeves. I couldn't raise my arms, I had to do gymnastics in that dress. The next year we all had uniforms. Great big voluminous bloomers, very voluminous, real knickerbockers, and then we put a skirt over that. We couldn't be seen without a skirt. It was very clumsy. But Miss Chapin was the first person to go into uniforms. And then she made an arrangement with a country school in Hartsdale, and we went up every Saturday morning and spent the day there. They had a hockey field, they had tennis courts, all sorts of things, and we had a wonderful day in the country. I don't think they do that any more. But it was wonderful in my day. I enjoyed it.

We had quizzes on dates. We used to have to recite Bible verses, five every week. We would all do it together. And then the next week we would have five more, and we would do all of them together. And fifteen, and the following year we would go through the same things all through, and I still can recite some of them. I found it invaluable. The very last year I was there they began thinking that that was too much following the teacher. It interfered with the individual thinking and I think she stopped.

But we had self government, we had all sorts of things. She was very advanced in her thinking, but it was classical education. I had five years of Latin, for which I have been

grateful, I had no trouble with Spanish verbs, and it helped me with the grammar when I was learning Russian. Of course I had German grammar in school, so that when I tried to speak German I didn't speak too ungrammatically.

Q: And then after Miss Chapin's did you go on?

WHITE: No, I am uneducated.

Q: Not at all!

WHITE: (Laughs) I had a marvelous education. We never had more than eight people in the class, because with fifteen in a class, it was divided into two divisions. I went to my seventieth reunion last year, and beside me was one [there] for her fiftieth. and I was saying this. And she said that was a very inefficient type, and I said, quite the contrary, it is very efficient. It may have been expensive. She said, that is what I meant. But it was a wonderful school, I really learned a great deal and enjoyed it enormously.

Q: Well, I have always heard about it, but I just never had occasion to think about what type of education it was.

WHITE: Now she has forty-five to a class, which are in two or three divisions, so they have about fifteen. Still small, but it's larger than it used to be. When I first came we wore aprons with lovely pockets to cover up our dresses so that we should all be looking alike, and I missed the aprons, because I missed the pockets.

Q: One of the reasons I asked about Miss Chapin's was, that it seems to be that your generation moved quite naturally and effortlessly into the Foreign Service because you were brought up and lived that way.

WHITE: You are quite right.

Q: And that doesn't [necessarily] happen today, and I believe that the Foreign Service was just an extension of the way you had grown up.

WHITE: There was a wonderful story that was told to me afterwards by one of the men, I can't remember his name, who had gone to Haiti to try to get artistic things going in Haiti. There was a lady who was running a hotel, and she had terrible trouble with some of the Americans there. She said, “Oh, these Americans are awful. Not everyone, now Madame White was a grande dame like us.” And of course they were. They were beautifully educated, they had much better manners than I had, and we understood each other immediately. We could speak the same language.

Q: You had the same relationship with the renowned Washington hostesses of your day, even though you were younger than they.

WHITE: Yes, I was younger.

Q: And you were included in their evenings.

WHITE: Age didn't matter. See, my husband was 14 years older than I. He was their contemporary, but the thing is, we were in the State Department at the time. So age didn't enter into it. It was just that we spoke the same language, and we had the same interests.

Q: That has disappeared from the Washington scene. Could you describe, say, an evening at Mrs. Bacon's or an evening at Mrs. Beale's ?

WHITE: I remember one evening talking to Teddy Robinson, a cousin of Teddy Roosevelt, Jr., and his saying, “Oh, it's just a dinner party like anybody else's.” (they laugh) That reminds me of a story of New York City. The Cathedral of St. John the Divine was being built. And then J. P. Morgan gave his money to build the Bishop's house. And when the thing came out, it was perfectly enormous. Someone said, “This is really awfully big for a Bishop.” And Morgan said, “I don't see why Bishops shouldn't live like other people.” (both

laugh) I never would have thought of that except for the remark “this party is like anybody else's.”

Q: So Mrs. Bacon ...

WHITE: I remember Mr. Bacon, too, as Congressman. A charming person, but oh so tired. He was awfully tired. He wasn't drinking too much, just keeping going. I said, “The thing to do is when I get overtired, is to go to bed.” In fact, in Argentina socially I was going morning, noon and night and I was exhausted. I began to deteriorate. So my ambassadress, Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss, said, “Now, you go to bed for two days.” I was only too delighted and stayed in bed for two days and came back completely restored. The next year I found I began to get a little bit teary. This time I stayed in bed for a week and read. Otherwise, I had no time to read. The third year I was all ready to go to bed for a month when we were transferred, (laughter) so there was no question of my doing it. But it makes me realize at some times that if you're always giving out, that you can't take in, you go to pieces.

Q: And we did a lot of giving out, didn't we?

WHITE: The year I was in Washington, in 1927-28, I'd start a book, I couldn't get beyond the fifth chapter. I was just wound up.

Q: That's when your brother became the White House aide for Protocol? I think the office had been recently founded, and Lilla (Pierrepont Moffat's) widow said that he was the first one to take over .

WHITE: I think he was just Protocol.

Q: He was it, he was — Protocol. (laughter)

WHITE: I remember he had a terrible time vis-a-vis seating, because the Japanese Emperor or somebody was on the verge of death and they didn't know if they would be

able to come or not. So they had two seatings ready in case at the last minute they would have to change. Plan A and Plan B, as it were. We had a dinner in Peru when a General arrived. I said, “And the Se#ora?” “Oh no... She didn't feel like coming tonight.” And of course she was well up in the seating plan and we had to — against my advice, they had a very narrow table. They'd thought in the office, “it's so much nicer if people can talk across the table.” The result was, only one person at the end. So when we took out one place, I had such care to get the places directly opposite and it was all higgledy-piggledy, we had to rearrange the whole dinner party because she was quite important and seating had to be completely rearranged. It was very awkward. But that's my husband's duty — he always “did” the seating.

Fortunately, one time in Riga, the maid came back and said, “There's a soldier at the door who says his name is not on the list.” We used to keep the seating in the front hall. So my husband went out and lo, here was a general, the Chief of Staff. My husband said, “Oh, I thought you'd gone on leave.” The General responded, “I put off my leave so I could come.” Of course, they were so simple, they didn't know you had to answer invitations. We had called up and found that he was going to go on leave, so we'd assumed he was not coming. We therefore put in an extra place. That made the l3th. And it was the best party we ever gave — it was the only one we'd ever given in Latvia where everybody spoke the same language. We had a succession of diplomats — the Lettish, Lithuanians, Estonians, Polish; and five Americans — all of whom spoke Russian! So everybody was talking Russian and they enjoyed it so much. It was a wonderful party — and nobody noticed we were thirteen. I'd given one when a 13th arrived who wasn't expected, and it was a flop — somebody gasped, “Oh, we're thirteen!” (she laughs) So you never can tell.

Q: Another change in the Service is that today the young women feel that they're an unrecognized adjunct to their husbands. They have no real role in the Service because of the 1972 Directive on spouses — the directive that made us “private individuals.” You were no longer mentioned in his Efficiency Report.

WHITE: It's so important.

Q: Yes.

WHITE: Well, I think one of the reasons is that the modern woman doesn't get into the countrso much. You see, our friends were mostly people of the country, and we were very much part of our husband's life. (It never occurred to us to be looked down upon, it was what was expected of us.) And we became interested in it. I wasn't so interested in the politics — some wives were. I used to tell my husband not to tell me anything that was hush-hush because I had a very open face, and if anybody wanted to they could find out because either I would forget that it was confidential and tell it, or else my face would go frozen and show it. So I said, “Don't tell me anything.”

But I was interested in the people. I learned the language wherever I was — not in Prague, as I wanted to learn Russian, so I didn't learn Czech. But I relearned my German, so I was able to talk in German. And I was interested in the history and in the culture of the people, and their religion. I had plenty to interest me wherever I went. And I much preferred the small places to the big ones. I dreaded the idea of going to Paris and I was so thankful afterwards when my husband said it was offered to him but he didn't think my health was up to it at that particular moment. So we turned it down. We went to Riga instead, which I much preferred. Riga was fascinating — small-town, very comfortable. One played tennis and had a comfortable life. We had friends among the Baltic aristocracy, amongst the Hanseatic people, amongst the Russian refugees and the Lettish government. And there were some English people who'd come out of Russia — fourth generation: scarcely spoke English. There were all sorts of people, it was so interesting.

We were there from 1924-27. We left in January 1927. The country became independent in February 1920 — those three countries. You can't have a national day in February, you can't have a military parade in winter. So they chose different dates in the summer, and the Legation went en masse — meaning the Minister and the Secretary. My husband was

First Secretary, and there was a Second Secretary and a Military Attach#: I guess that was it. That was “en masse” (she laughs). We went up to Estonia and down to Lithuania. We'd go down in the winter, too, to both places for their celebrations.

In Estonia there were some houses up on the hill — there were still the old wooden houses that you see in Russia, with the double windows with cushions in them to keep the drafts away. It reminded me of what my sister-in-law said in Germany: “The air is good in the country because the peasants keep their windows shut.” (laughter) Then I would dismiss my car and would take a droshky, a one-horse sleigh whose shafts were part of the box on which we sat. When the sleigh began to skid, it would turn the horse around, and of course they had the duga over the arch, to keep the shafts together. I used to love it. We'd sit on the box with a heavy robe over our knees but with nothing to hold onto except the seat — to hit the curb, you nearly fell out. But it was great fun.

We went down to the cathedral in Kaunas, Lithuania, once, in '26 just before we left, for the consecration of the former foreign minister as Bishop In Partes Infidelis. The Lithuanians had been able to get education in their own language only in the church schools. The church Party was in power, and I was talking — flirting — with a young man in a white tie at a party when the music struck up. He said, “Excuse me, I don't dance” and got up. He had an overgrown tonsure, (she laughs) he was a priest, so I suppose that's why he didn't dance. Perhaps not, however, because when Meyrovich was Foreign Minister in Riga, he said, “I want every person in the Foreign Office to learn how to dance, it's very important.” So they had these dancing classes, to which they invited the other ministers and their wives who also didn't know how to dance.

Jack was charg#, and we went to an official dinner party at the Acting Foreign Minister's. I looked down the table and here were people, pairs, facing each other all the way down the line, and not a word was being spoken the whole length of the table! I burst out laughing, and everyone turned to see — “Who's laughing at this party?” When the dinner was over, we rose, the hostess stood up, “Now, we can dance.” So, great excitement, and then we

had the best party that ever was. Of course the Russians were also at the party — the man (Russian) sat almost opposite me but we didn't catch each other's eyes, we didn't talk. Later they were at one end of the room and I was at the other, so we didn't have to bump into each other. It was a wonderful party from then on, because they were learning to dance, which was pretty exciting.

Q: Interesting, that they did not dance before.

WHITE: But they were simple people. And they'd been through the War — they were simple people, that was the fundamental reason. The Secretary of the Estonian Legation told me, “Oh, America is a wonderful place.” He'd had an aunt who came to this country. “She was a cook and saved enough money to set us all up.” You see, that's the kind of people they were. He had a great respect for education, and when he was in the Russian army, in some capacity, and they camto a big house, people were tearing up books and furniture to build fires. Having such respect for books, he stopped them from tearing up any more. This is just to illustrate the type of person these guests were.

Q: Were you not bothered by the long winters, by the dark?

WHITE: It wasn't completely dark.

Q: They call it “murky-time”, I believe?

WHITE: I remember, in September it began to be overcast. One day in December I realized we hadn't seen the sun for six weeks. That was depressing. Sometimes it rained but often it just didn't rain.

Q: Margaret was small, so you were busy with her?

WHITE: She was born in '22, so she was quite small. I had a Finnish nurse for her because I didn't know anything about babies. We were posted to Venezuela at the time of her birth. (I went home to New York for the event.) In Caracas I had a Swiss maid

— really to keep Margaret company. I nursed her for eight months, supplemented with powdered milk, but I thought she ought to have fresh milk. I was afraid of the cows, they were all tuberculous, so I got a goat. But the goat had no milk. We waited and waited. Finally I thought, “This is a fraud, I'm going to send it back.” That day she dropped her kid! (hearty laughter) Having been brought up on Heidi, I told the Swiss maid to go down and supervise milking the goat. But being a city girl, she'd never seen a goat before! But she did see that the man washed his hands before milking. Margaret drank the milk willingly — it had no taste when it was fres[several sentences obscured by massive interference] ... because I remembered babies would take the washrag and go and suck. So we'd have too much hot water, we'd leave some to cool for the next day. I had a little rubber tub for her upstairs and would wash her with boiled water.

Traveling was more primitive, and more interesting, in those days. For instance, when we went into Nepal in the late 1930s the Maharajah loaned us some horses and we rode over the mountains. Now you fly over them. As we were going over, we passed some men carrying an automobile over. They had two enormous poles, eight men to a pole, and two crews of sixteen.

They were going over from India into Nepal and this was the only way we'd used to be able to get there. But our number two, Edward Groth, had been over — he went on foot because he didn't like to ride — and when he went over, they passed 100 men pulling a steamroller over the pass. It had done its work by the time we came. There were two or three roads one could drive around in the valley of Nepal. We drove all around.

In those days, wherever we went — they called him “the guide” — he was really a guard, I think to keep us from doing things rather than to protect us. We came to one village where they were setting up the warp on the looms, wound on sticks to keep it from getting tangled. Both the woman and her ten-year-old child looked pregnant. I was simply appalled ... This little girl, she might have been only nine, being very pregnant. The man smiled. “That's because in the old days,” he said, “the man who ruled here would respect

pregnant women. So then everybody dressed as though they were pregnant, even the little girls." (laughter)

Q: Was this when you were in Calcutta?

WHITE: We went from Calcutta up into Nepal in 1938. In '39, we went to Tibet. So it was Afghanistan, Nepal and Tibet from Calcutta. The trip to Afghanistan was official because we'd had trouble up there — they'd found oil and so various companies had sent people to investigate. They hadn't found any oil there at all but in the meantime they'd decided they should have American representation up there. We'd broken off relations with the Iranians — they were still Persians, before World War II. There was no Minister in Tehran, so Jack who was then Consul General in India, was sent up. That was a very interesting trip.

We got up there when they were celebrating the tenth anniversary of the accession to the throne of the son of Amanullah [Amanullah (1892-1960) was king of Afghanistan 1926-29. After a tour of Europe, he attempted to introduce a number of Western reforms, but his subjects rebelled against his program and he fled the country in 1929, remaining in exile in Switzerland until his death.] , who had been driven out by a man who was known as "the water carrier." It was the excesses at that time which were the basis of the book Shangri La by James Hilton. According to Muslim law, the oldest male would take over as the next ruler. There were three brothers, however, who couldn't agree among themselves which would take over. So they said, "Let's have the son (who was still a minor) become king and we'll rule the country." So one brother was prime minister, one was minister of war, and the third was ambassador to London.

Now, ten years later, we arrived. They had a wonderful celebration for the anniversary. The Boy Scouts demonstrated on a big field. There were Afghan dancers and they strolled in, dressed in big white voluminous trousers and little red bolero jackets, and danced their whirling dances, just to a drum, then sat down. Suddenly we heard a flute and a small drum. In came, dancing, a group of about 30 men, dressed in long khaki trousers fastened

at the knees, full but not as full as the Afghans', and long tunics about knee-length, nipped in at the waist; and the Greek key motif around the bottom edge of the tunic. They did a round dance, then various form dances, then — the flute still playing — danced away again. It was explained to us that they were Khafirs; the word means “infidels.” They were supposed to be the survivors either of Alexander's army or the Bactrian army that had settled there. They sat on chairs. I'm told that since then the Afghans made a great effort to proselytize them to become Muslims. I imagine you'd never see those dances again.

On another day we went to another field where they performed the wonderful “polo” game with the dead sheep — everybody has seen that. But there were three tribes playing the game. The tribe that won, dressed in garments like quilted comforters, pink flowers on white, went and sat on the bare hills to one side while the other two tribes competed for the second prize. There was tremendous excitement. Two of them, wild tribesmen, dashed up on their horses, apparently over some disagreement, objecting to the final decision. So the Prime Minister, a tall man with a gray karakul cap, told them, “Now, get off your horses” — a tribesman on foot is not the same thing as a tribesman on a horse. Then he said, “You two will play it out together. You can have the other half of the prize.” So peace was restored.

But they did it beautifully. They had a little white felt tent with designs on it, and a little garden with painted grass; everything was beautifully done. We had refreshments. One of the interesting things was that they didn't quite know what to do about us. After all, Jack was just a Charg# d'Affaires, which isn't very much. But the United States is a fairly big country, so they decided that the thing to do was to introduce us to the King. There was a British person who'd been there for two or three years and had never met the King. Thanks to their introducing us to him, they all had the same chance.

Q: Were there any Afghan women present?

WHITE: No.

Q: They were all in purdah, behind walls?

WHITE: Yes. In Calcutta, I went to some theater parties when I first came. Two or three years later, a lot of them were out. But there was one Bengali lady in Calcutta who'd been in England but when she returnehome, went back into purdah. She said she didn't like the attitude of the Indian men. So she stayed at home and she'd invite some of the foreign ladies. I was classified as a European and was invited also. She'd have a marvelous feast for us — she'd done 56 different dishes, little things, all round, mostly fried. I wondered why she bothered — they were all so hot you couldn't tell them apart. The fourth year I was remembering some from the year before; I'd become accustomed to the food. (laughter) She entertained my mother when she came out to visit me.

She took Mother all through the house. I'd always been through with a crowd but Mother was alone. There were three kitchens: one for European food, one for Indian food, and one for the widowed mother-in-law who couldn't eat any of the food that the others would eat. Then she showed Mother the bathrooms also, which were the hole-in-the-ground kind; Mother had a very interesting time. Later we enjoyed the excitement of her son's being engaged to marry, as chosen by the astrologers, it had to be just right. Then we heard all about the wedding. The last year we were there, we saw the bride — she was still pretty; but she had no children. In the course of events I saw a look of hatred, suppressed hatred in the girl's eyes as she looked at her mother-in-law. I think mother-in-law must have made a few remarks about her being barren. It was too bad.

The YWCA did a rather interesting thing. They had two clubs, one that they called the Friday Evening Club for women whose mothers were in purdah, so when they met young men, they weren't able to bring them home. The young women could meet their young men at this club under proper auspices. It was very popular. The other one was called the International Club. There they had women from all the different parts of India, and the women had great fun dressing up in each other's clothes. You could tell where people came from by what they wore. I'm told that has more or less disappeared too, that clothing

has become a more universal type. I don't know how the women managed. The Parsee women would put the sari up on the right side, the others on the left side, or vice versa.

Q: Did you always do volunteer work in every country?

WHITE: No, I didn't.

Q: It just wasn't done, was it.

WHITE: There wasn't any to do. It never occurred to me. In Argentina they had the Beneficencia, a charity through which they gave support to various people, but there wasn't any of the type of work that we have here, volunteer work. I didn't do any volunteer work in Calcutta, either.

Q: I don't think it existed in Foreign Service, really, until after World War II.

WHITE: I don't think so either. After World War I, we saw the American “baby feeders” — the effort organized by Herbert Hoover, the milk stations. In Vienna I saw lines of children going to get their milk, including some very well-dressed children. And they had it all through Poland, but that was organized, it wasn't “the thing” that you did volunteer work.

Q: Didn't Hoover have a program with the Lapp children too, in Lapland?

WHITE: I know Culbertson wrote to raise money for the second World War and he did such a clever letter — described a little boy that he knew, how the child gradually became so listless from lack of food. It was extraordinarily well writtebecause you could understand the tragedy of one child where you couldn't understand a thousand.

I thought about it, but there never was anything to be done. What I did in Calcutta for amusement was to sing in the choir at the cathedral. They had little boys who sang at the boys' school, trained to sing very well. Whenever you got a festival at the church, they were always there. They'd had a concert just before I arrived, so I went down and asked if

I could join the choral society. They said, “This is probably our last concert. So why don't you join the choir. What kind of voice do you have?” I said, “I used to sing alto but I think my voice is getting higher.” “Don't let it change!” (laughter) So without any tryout, I was the alto in the choir.

At one time later, a different man who was choirmaster, being more ambitious, had engaged some professional singers to sit in with us. But he'd had no rehearsal for them and they'd never been in an Anglican church before. I'm Episcopalian, the same thing as the Church of England. We used to sing the Eucharist. I'd at least heard them, but I was always singing the alto part, but I more or less heard the thing. Then I realized these people had to be led, so I had to sing the soprano — I'd never sung it before. It was very awkward. But that was my amusement there.

Then of course there were bridge parties and things in the morning. In late afternoon one played tennis or went for a walk. There was an American Presbyterian minister who came out. He wanted a church so as to have some reason to be there, but he didn't want a mission; he wanted to study Sanskrit and do his own thing. They said, “Well, there's an Anglo-Indian church here.” To which he replied, “Just what I wanted.” And he came out. He thought he was going to have the English military and generals and people like that, but now the Anglo-Indian were the Eurasians — half-English, half-Indian, most of whom were working on the railroad. But he played the game and preached. I went there one day when I could get away from the choir. He preached a very good sermon; he was very nice. His wife used to go to all these parties. She said, “You're not the least different from the purdah ladies. The only thing is that you have men at your parties.” (she laughs) “But you spend your life just playing bridge and doing nothing.” That was one of the aspects different from volunteer work.

Q: Now I'm going to skip around. At lunch you began to talk about Germany, and meeting Hitler. I think that definitely should be on.

WHITE: Well, we got there, as I said, in December 1933. He'd been there since the end of January. The day after we arrived there was a tremendous gathering at the Sportspalast to raise money for the Winterhilfe [Winter Relief, the principal Nazi charity]. They were going to play the fanfares written by Frederick the Great. We were given special places. The huge floor was absolutely crammed with people. Then all these enormous klieg lights were playing all around. Music started, a group came forward, and then as the music ended, the lights full on him, Hitler came forward and everyone raised their arm in salute HEIL HITLER! All very dramatic. This was around Christmas time.

Then a short time later there was a big party given by the Foreign Minister. All the nobility had come in from all over who hadn't been to Berlin since the Republic came in. They were oh so glad to see each other — “haven't seen you for so long...” “you haven't changed a bit” and so forth. “And what do you do about Winterhilfe?” They used to look after their own people. Now that the Nazis were going to take over, “what are you going to do?” So they immediately began discussing shop. And then it seems that they were looking forward — they all thought that Hitler was going to bring in the Crown Prince as Kaiser.

I said, “I cannot think that a person who came in like that would have someone walking behind him.” It just didn't seem to make sense. The next day we heard that they'd raided the steel helmet organization and broken up the whole movement. So all these disappointed aristocrats went home. That was our introduction to the situation. Thanks to the fact that some of the Jews saw the writing on the wall early and left, we got a beautiful house with a lovely garden in the Tiergarten area.

We had a few Jewish friends who had stayed on and who were charming. When there got to be too many of them, I felt foreign, but when there was just one or two, just individuals, they were perfectly delightful. My mother came out to visit us. Elsie Wilson and Russell Train, then about fifteen, were with her and young Orme came to lunch. And we had a terrible time the night before getting home. There was a lot of traffic but we had no trouble

— Goering's airmen seemed to be running the traffic, which seemed unusual. The next day they shut off Tiergartenstrasse entirely, so we came up along the Ufer, the edge of the canal, and came in from the back. I told Jack about this, so he immediately called up an American journalist and asked, “What's going on?” He replied, “Oh, “Hitler has shot Roehm” We all discussed that, it was great excitement.

That afternoon I left to play tennis at a Fraulein S..... I'd just met a short time before. I had trouble finding the place. When I finally arrived there were several people there, all with long faces talking about 1792 [An insurrection on August 10, 1792, established the Republic in France. A mob stormed the Tuileries and an insurrectionary commune replaced the legally elected one.]. I didn't know what it was all about. And I said, “Well, I hear that Hitler's shot Roehm.” They looked at me as though I were absolutely out of my mind. So I thought, oh dear, I've said something I shouldn't say; so I didn't say anything more. Well, we went down to play tennis. In the midst of the game our hostess came running down the hill to the tennis court, saying, “It's absolutely true, I've heard it on the Czech television — that he not only shot Roehm but shot his boyfriend — that Hitler told him to commit suicide and he said, “If you want me dead, you must shoot me yourself.” Which he did.

So then my partner said, “I know nothing and I've said nothing. I must go consult my partner.” The reason why they didn't believe me was that they'd just been seeing General von Schleicher, who was extreme Right; both he and his wife had been killed just an hour before. That was why they'd said “1792”. And Roehm was to the Left, so they couldn't believe that Hitler had gone both ways. But when it was confirmed — apparently the partner was with a group in the middle. They were all waiting for Gen. von Hindenburg to die. And Hitler didn't wait; he jumped the gun. Hindenburg was more or less ga-ga by that time.

The next day, we'd been invited to tea by some people that I'd only recently met, in the Wannsee, which was a lake just within the precincts of Berlin. I had again had trouble

finding the house but the lake was absolutely packed with little sailboats — “standing room only.” And when we got to the door, finally, on a little peninsula, a man in a long coat came up to me and said, “You can't go any further.” I replied that I was Mrs. White and I was invited to tea. Then he gave me a letter from my host saying he was very sorry that he couldn't receive me but he was under house arrest but was being very nicely treated; would I please give the letter back.

Well, I hadn't thought of keeping the letter until then. I wanted to but obviously I couldn't keep it because it would look as though he were passing a message on. So I gave the letter back. That was 1934 and we left in '35, so it was a year and a half later, my tennis partner told me the reason why they were so worried: because they couldn't believe that both Left and Right were involved — so he told his partner that he'd better go out to dinner just as if nothing had happened. His host was arrested who was not implicated in anything, they couldn't find anything on him in his papers. But the guest was one who was implicated; they didn't get him.But my poor partner was half Jewish and he was very much in love with a German girl. They were not allowed to get married because she was half Jewish and an irregular arrangement was also verboten. So a year or two later, I believe that he just committed suicide. We heard that another man we knew who was 100 percent Jewish, his ashes had been sent back to his wife.

Q: I'm just noting that this is?

WHITE: June 30, 1934.

Q: That's five years before World War II began.

WHITE: Oh yes. In Europe, the road signs are all pictorial and exclamation points don't enter, because everybody speaks different languages. Wherever Jack saw an exclamation point, he immediately drove in and then would say in English, “Oh, is it not allowed? I'm so sorry ...” because he was always stopped by a soldier. He realized that they were rearming very fast; so did the British counterpart. But neither government would believe

it. In fact, I came across a letter after Jack died which he'd written to Pierrepont. It was a private letter, to Pierrepont, who was head of the European bureau at that time, from Berlin in which he said that he thought we were really going to have a breakthrough in disarmament. I wanted to send that to today's disarmament commission with the Russians re a breakthrough: when a person wants to rearm, they keep you dangling and make you think they're going to disarm. But I won't go into that now.

That was in the beginning of 1934; we'd only been there a short time. The buildup was more and more. We left at the beginning of 1936 to go to India but we left our little girl with the governess in Berlin so she could finish her school year. The governess had a part-German, part-Polish beau, so when Hitler moved into the Ruhr, we realized that the beau was very much in favor of it because Margaret was saying what a good thing it was! He was a very nice beau; the governess eventually married him. But we couldn't discuss the situation because our arguments were based on different premises. He listened to his radio, we listened to ours. And they were different, so how could we discuss things? Eventually the couple got to South Africa and then to Georgia; she has just died.

Q: When did Margaret catch up with you? Did she come to Calcutta eventually?

WHITE: No. She went home and spent the summer with my mother. Actually, the way we got to Calcutta was because the people appointed to go there refused to go on health grounds. It's possible they didn't have a mother to send their children to; mothers are very important in these cases. So my mother took care of Margaret all that year and then she went to boarding school. (interference — a passage having to do with some aspect of Margaret during her time in U.S.)

When I was in India, I was reading some novels and one of them said her husband was being transferred to Kashmir. “How nice! Then I can have the children there.” I said, “Aha — children?” So I wrote back to Mother, saying, “Why don't you bring her out and stay with us.” So Mother came out in '37 and visited us. I went back with her and we went to the

coronation of George VI. I think I brought Margaret back with me when I came back that time. [N.B. Summer of 1937 - Grandmother not along.]

We went up to Kashmir and went over the pass on the Gilgit road as far as Astor — just roughing it with a huge tent which had a bathroom compartment and a dining room and a guest room and two bedrooms — oh, roughing it.

Q: What a marvelous experience for her!

WHITE: And then we had horses, and of course pack horses, to carry all this paraphernalia. But one time Jack was ahead, on a horse, and she and I were walking, the pack horses way behind us. Suddenly two men came running down the hill toward us. All I could think of was my 15-year-old daughter. But the man was holding his right arm, which was all swollen, and they wanted medical advice. Of course I had nothing with me, any medicines I had was with the pack animals. He was coated with mud. After some of it was removed, I could see it was not discolored. What it was, of course, was elephantiasis; there was nothing I could do. I said there was a hospital back behind, but they said they couldn't go there, that they needed him because he could do certain things with his hand.

That was a wonderful trip. But on the way back we went out on a houseboat on the Lake of Kashmir and on into the next lake, and then had the boats take us back again. Then we took the train to Lahore — no, that was another trip; I get different ones mixed up. But anyway, on this same trip, I think, we stopped at the Faletti Hotel in Lahore, which had no mosquito bars. It had high ceilings, dark wood, and screens in the windows; but if a mosquito got in, he couldn't get out. And Lahore is notorious for malaria. So Jack immediately demanded mosquito bars, Margaret in one room, Jack and I in another. Then Jack took the train back and Margaret and I continued in our own station wagon, which Jack, who was 6'4", had designed so he could be comfortable. When it was painted black I said, "This is a hearse." It did have a thin little red line, too thin to see.

We were a little late in going to the road but with diplomatic immunity they thought we could go on up. We rounded a corner, going in the wrong direction. These roads are one way: in certain hours you went one way, at other hours the opposite way. And here was another car in the middle of the road. We veered to the left, as one should, and banged heavily into an overhanging cliff. The wood body of this vehicle was badly “bent”, clearly smashed. We kept going. At the end of the road they wouldn't let us in, we'd no right to be going in the wrong direction. So I said we'd had an accident. The official inspected the car. Quite obviously we had had an accident. So then he let us in, acknowledging it might have been the reason for our delay.

At another point on that trip we were crossing a valley and there were little sand-devils, whirlwinds rising straight up in a spout. One thrust into the ca(making gesture) like that and broke into pieces, covering the whole car with earth. Then it rained a little, and one side of the pebbles was wet, one was dry: the rain was driving horizontally.

That's the trouble ... I've got “pictures”, here and there, and it's hard to put them together...

Q: We'd been talking about Margaret leaving boarding school and having a marvelous experience like this.

WHITE: Oh, she came out. And Jack and I both made this trip and coming on the old Grand Trunk Road of Kipling, I was amazed how little traffic there was on it. All of a sudden, a nilgai, a large antelope, ran across in front of us. We failed to see the female following along and ran into her. Our bearer said, “Have you got a gun? Could you shoot it.” I said, “No, I don't shoot, I don't have a gun.” So the poor nilgai picked herself up, shook her hind leg, her foot was broken, and she had a huge gash on her shoulder.

The country was quite open, only a few trees here and there. And suddenly we were surrounded by people, there must have been almost a hundred. There were white cattle pulling little boys along, very excited, smelling the wild animal and blood. The little villages

had roads between them and everybody had rushed out when they heard the excitement. Finally the nilgai hobbled off and I suppose a leopard had a good meal that night — which was better than our shooting it.

One night, quite late, we came to a bridge with a barrier across, blocking a new road. Our driver went around the barrier and made deep ruts in the new road — I was so embarrassed — and we crossed the bridge. But there was no place to stay on the other side. Only afterwards I realized that the lack of traffic on the road was because the bridge was blocked off, unknown to whoever had planned our trip. So we hadn't seen all the life along it that we should have seen.

We would come to a small town of an evening. White cattle would be lying in the middle of the road, because that's where it's dry. We'd stop, our bearer would get out, twist their tails, and they'd heave themselves up and get out of the way. We'd arrive at a railroad crossing, it would be closed. He would enter the cabin where the attendant lived, and tell him to open the gate for us. When was the train coming? “Oh, soon.” It wouldn't be coming for two or three hours.

The last night we had dinner at a place about 146 miles from Calcutta. We decided to go on. By this time I realized I had fever, I thought probably dengue. I said, “Let's keep going.” On occasion I had taken the wheel from the driver, and that woke him up. This time I didn't, however. Suddenly I noticed the car was slowing down. An animal loping down the middle of the road ahead of us. In my feverish state I wailed, “Oh, we'll never get to Calcutta because the animal will get tired.” I remembered, then, how in Argentina the cattle occupied the road and we were told, “Don't blow the horn. Turn your lights off and shout.” So I told the driver to turn the lights off. He did, then turned them on again. In that moment, the animal, which had seen a light this way, then that way, and therefore kept on, went off to one side. Now we saw that it was a cheetah.

We finally arrived in Calcutta at 5 a.m. We were met by a trained nurse. My husband had come down with a fever, and to make it easier for the nurse, he took a downstairs room. I went upstairs to our room on the second floor, reached by 37 easy steps. Next morning I had to do various things, including paying the driver off. When I'd finished, I said to the nurse, “I think we should take my temperature now.” It was 105. (laughing) What Jack and I had was tertiary malaria, which we'd got in the Lahore hotel. Fortunately Margaret had not been bitten, so she didn't get it. Now, she was on her own. So Edward Groth, Jack's number two, took her out to see the sights, including the Victoria Memorial by moonlight. That's right in the Maidan in Calcutta — white domes and so forth. I asked her, “What was the moon like?” (assuming extreme matter-of-fact tone) “The usual amount,” said Margaret. (both laughing) She was 15 and he was 47. It was not very romantic.

Q: Where did she meet Tap Bennett?

WHITE: By telephone. He was a cousin of my cousin's wife. He was junior economic analyst in the Dominican Republic under Avra Warren. So when Jack and I visited the Warrens there, I asked to see Tap Bennett. We were very late in arriving, so I only saw him about one minute. The only thing he asked us: “Will your daughter be there?” I said, “No, I'm afraid she won't.” Well, he never came. But apparently the Lawtons, he was Secretary there then, had come down by plane with Margaret. When they got there, they said, “Tap, we've found the girl for you. The daughter of the American Ambassador.” Naturally he was curious to meet her.

Then, when he came back, he got in touch with his cousin, said he'd like to meet Margaret. She was working, then, on Newsweek, in New York, and had to work on weekends. Monday a telephone caller said, “This is Tap Bennett, we've been introduced by telephone, will you come out to lunch with me?” So she went, had a lovely time. At five o'clock he called again. “My train isn't going right away, will you have tea with me?” She went, they

had a lovely time. He took his train back to Washington and she heard nothing more from him. Thinking to herself, “Another charming man gone.”

One day, a telephone call: “I discover you've got an uncle in Washington. Why don't you come down and visit him?” So she went. (both laughing). I think they were practically engaged at that moment. Then he went to Panama — Avra Warren was now Ambassador there and knew a good post when he saw one, so he sent for Tap to come down. Meanwhile, Tap had discovered that one could still enlist in the Army in Panama — he'd been turned down earlier because he was terribly nearsighted. General Brett said, “Well, you don't need 20/20 vision to do intelligence work.” So Tap enlisted and was in basic training in the Canal Zone when Margaret came down on her way to visit us. A young man from Pan American came around to me in Lima and said, “Miss White is not on the plane coming down from Panama, at her own request.” That seemed strange. A few days later came a telegram: “Engaged to Tap Bennett. Sure you'll approve.” She'd stayed with the Warrens, you see, and they had given a dinner for them. Two or three generals and high officials were there — and two privates.(laughter) Quite obvious why they were there.

He went on and did his basic training for six weeks and was then “in” intelligence and got to the opening of the United Nations in San Francisco. We were worried he wouldn't get back in time to get married. They were married in Bernardsville, New Jersey at my mother's place. Maine was where I grew up, but the family only went there in summers. My brother Pierrepont had lung problems, so we left Maine and went to the mountains, to Chocorua, New Hampshire, when I was 16, 17 and 18. My father died when I was 18, in 1916. Mother finally bought a place iBernardsville, New Jersey, near her brother — he was in Far Hills. From then on we always went to New Jersey, but that was after I was married.

Q: Your husband was about 14 years older than you. So he really was an established Foreign Service Officer when you were married.

WHITE: Oh yes.

Q: So you were just sort of swept into all of this, weren't you. As a young woman.

WHITE: I was 22, not quite 23. It was very nice, because with this difference of age, my friends were all so young to him, so we started fresh together in Venezuela, which made it very nice. It was a charming place, Venezuela. It was in an old colonial town. We had a double house, parts of the house divided by two patios. Our Minister, a political appointee named [Willis C.] Cook, had a single house. They were very nice simple people. We arrived a short time before July Fourth. At the Fourth of July party, General Gomez, the dictator, came. The president, Marcos Bustillos, was a figurehead who wasn't allowed to succeed himself. I'll never forget Gomez. He was enormously stout. I wondered if he could touch his hands in front of his stomach. But he had a most alert face. You felt that nothing escaped his eye. He made a tremendous impression on me. I never saw him again.

“Nothing ever happened” except that one thing about the food shipment. We were always at the end of a beautiful epoch. After we left, there was a revolt against Gomez. Various people were imprisoned. He'd been ill and had let them out.

Q: (laughing) “I'll let them out if you'll make me well” sort of thing.

WHITE: Yes. So he let them out, and it wasn't long before he arrested them again. Some of them escaped — our military attach# helped one of them to escape. But it was a charming place. My husband was always a great walker having been brought up in England, and we'd go for walks all around the town. He also formed a golf club, he being the champion golfer of Venezuela! I think there were, in all, five players. As a prize, he got a dozen highball glasses, of which I still have one. That was 1921-23.

Forty years later, in 1964, we went back to Caracas. Of course all the part where we'd lived was gone. Now there were big office buildings back from a big wide avenue, instead of the narrow street with sidewalks just one person wide and a policeman standing at the corner. Our address was No. 8, Conde a Carmelitas. The British Legation was down

another street, Carmelitas something-else. They had a really beautiful old colonial house. I've seen some like it in Guatemala, with great big rooms around a huge patio filled with plants, and wide covered verandas level with the ground. We used to go there often for tea. Ours was probably mid-19th century, with a zag#an, the entranceway.

(End of Tape I, Begin Tape II)

WHITE: And we stopped off in Bangkok. We went sightseeing, and young Minnegerode, who was VicConsul, took us out to see the klongs, the canals. He said, “You must always come at 7:30, that's when the tide is right.” And I said, (she laughs) “It shows what you know about tides.” You think they're always “right”? Anyway, he took us around and we climbed up thwattaroon — I remember the name because it sounds like “water ruin” — which had very steep steps, with no railings. And when we got to the top, Mother said, “How am I ever going to get down?” Well, she got down all right — backwards.

That was in 1937. In '69, I went with Elsie Wilson. That staircase was blocked off. Boatloads were 20 to a launch and there were about 15 launches putting smoke into the air because we had to go shopping to buy things. Things have changed since then. Similarly, in 1939 in Bangkok we saw the kafchi. Two ladies had come in a national costume, with a chic that would put any Parisian woman to shame. They were sophisticates; talking English and French. Jack had been at a dinner in 1919 — he'd been in Bangkok through the Peace Conference and he attended the first dinner at which wives were present. He said they didn't say a word. And now here were these women talking with men just like any Parisian. Very interesting. In '69, we never saw anyone in costume. That's one of the things that has changed in international travel. In Nepal, we went on horseback; you fly. We went up to Tibet as far as Giangtse, not having permission to go on to Lhasa, nor did we have the time. The other day, Margaret and Tap flew into Lhasa, and drove around in an automobile. There was no wheeled traffic in Tibet, which caused me to recall that in Central and South America, they had no wheeled traffic. They have found toys with wheels, but there was no need for wheels! They may have known about them but

there was no need for them. These Tibetans knew about wheeled traffic but it didn't suit the country. They had to make special roads for them, which the Chinese made so that they could come in.

We were in Argentina at the end of an epoch. It was the time of the Revolution. That was exciting. The Revolution was when the upper classes came back, it must have been in '32, which was when they had revolutions all over South America. All it amounted to in Argentina was a change of government. From then on it was the upper classes still. We left long before Peron was ever heard of. Things have gone downhill since then.

Q: Then you went to Berlin. And that was certainly the end

WHITE: Well, that was the beginning of — it really had already begun to change. Then we went to India, which was at the end of the British Raj. In fact, when we got there, in 1936, in Bengal they passed a law to have the primary school education in the vernacular. It was Lord Macaulay in 1836 who'd made them have everything in English. He felt they should not be “deprived” of the beauties of the English language, of whic(laughing) he was an exponent. I think that was the beginning of the breakup — that was what has held India together, the one common language. But they only know it now as a second language, so they don't speak it as well as they used to. That's why I feel badly about this country letting people learn in their own language instead of learning English as their forefathers did — all the Europeans who came, Czechs, Hungarians, and all, who were only too delighted to learn English. Of course, there were fewer of them. All troubles come from numbers.

Following India, Jack was made Resident Minister, which he said was the lowest form of ambassadorial life. This was in Tangier. They asked him in March 1940 when “the phony war” was still going on, and we replied that yes, we could. We didn't leave until July, and the question was how would we get there. Originally, we planned to go across France, but the war had broken out in earnest. So we said we'd go via North Africa, and then the Italians entered the War. We said now we'll go by way of Lake Chad, by Air France. Then

France fell and Air France was grounded. Jack said then we'd go by way of South Africa, but we couldn't get a sailing. At last he said, “I think we'll go by the Orient Express.”

We flew to Baghdad and there we waited five days while they brought the rolling stock down and we had the first through train on the Berlin-Baghdad Railway. When I was a child, my mother used to go to lectures on current events and she'd come back and tell us over lunch what she'd heard. Pierrepont was always interested in foreign affairs, Abbot was always interested in local politics, and I was always interested in people, things and ideas. One of the things she told us about was the Berlin-Baghdad Railway, and that recollection stayed with me. So this trip was very exciting. At last we were on the train, an(laughing) we went through a place which was terribly hot, so we moved back to the dining car to get a cold drink, and the young engineers would say, in a voice loud enough for us to hear, “Oh, remember how hot it was in such-and-such a place?” We had to stay three hours in Mosul and I looked at the thermometer. It was 123 — and we were in the shade of the station. After several hours, I looked again and found it was noticeably cooler — only 117.

There was a very dressy young woman with platinum hair down to her shoulders, which she soon put up, who changed her clothes two or three times. So I said to her, “It's only 117.” “Not cool enough,” said she.

We had little fans this big, in the compartment. Then we arrived at the border. “Everybody out, to go through Customs,” came the voice. This was the border with Syria, so was under French domination. This was after Mosul, so I'm not certain what border it was. The officers were French, and our bags had to go through Customs. Being Diplomatic, ours were not opened but they had to be presented. Jack, having noticed the young blonde, remarked, “I'm sure she's a spy. She's obviously Jewish. What does a rich Jewess do travelling around like this?” As we got out of the train, she was surrounded by French officers and we heard her say, in English, “But my passport, it is in order.” Obviously a

spy's passport would be in order but she never reentered the train. I don't know what happened to her.

We went to Ankara instead of going through to Istanbul. In Ankara we drove around for one day while our Diplomatic passports were visa'd. Then they informed us, “we're here but the Ambassador is in Istanbul.” So then we went on to Istanbul and called on the Italian Ambassador. He said, “Yes, I'm here. But my seals are in Ankara.” (both laugh) “But you don't have to go back,” he added. “I'll send them back.” We'd both been to Istanbul before, but I'd never been to sweet-waters of Asia. Our ambassadress, Mrs. Murray, was there, taking the cure, so we went over and saw heIt was just a resort so I was disappointed when I got there.

We got our visas and continued on the Orient Express. In Turkey, we had big white buns. When we got to Yugoslavia, we had smaller grayish buns. When we got to Italy, we had very small, completely gray buns. We got off in Venice and went around in a gondola to the Consulate. We asked them, “Would you mind paying our gondola, because we haven't any money, we couldn't get any.” They didn't like to do this because they only had so much allotment to change but they did give us some money. We took a motorboat at night in very dim light. All lights were covered with heavy frames. The windowglass in the palaces was all painted blue. There was just one light in the station for the poor clerks to work by, and it was covered to avoid any leaks.

Then we took the train to Rome. We checked in at the Hotel Estredad. We went around the city a bit the next day. Our meals were in the dining room, the walls being apricot-colored, a charming big basement room. That night we saw the former Italian Ambassador to Berlin and greeted him. As we came out there were people at the piano. Having arrived that morning, I was very tired and wanted to go to bed early. I was no sooner in bed, about ten o'clock, than there was an air raid warning. I said, “Jack, I will NOT go down to that piano in my nightgown at ten o'clock at night.” We were on the fifth floor, so we just stayed where we were. Everything was so quiet for a whole hour. Then the all-clear sounded,

and people returned from the shelter, furious at the top of their lungs over having been “interfered” with.

Headlights were all painted blue, and sidewalks were painted white so you could follow the street. The next day we went to call on the Kincaids. He was Naval Attach# and we hadn't seen them for some time. They had a charming apartment. They told us that the night before there had been no anti-aircraft firing, but two nights before that the anti-aircraft guns had fired away and a piece of shrapnel fell down through their skylight into the staircase of their building and some people were wounded. The next day we flew to Barcelona in a small plane. There were six or eight very healthy looking young Germans in civilian clothes; we thought they must have been soldiers.

After one day in Barcelona, up to Madrid, spent a day there, then took a plane to Tangier. Jack said he thought we could get there in three weeks. We arrived in three weeks and a day. The day before we left Calcutta, we'd talked with some people whom we'd just met. They said, “Oh, you kept us awake last night.” “What do you mean?” “Well, we realized you were trying to get to Morocco and we wondered how on earth you'd ever get there. One of us would have an idea and the other one would be asleep. Then the first one would say, 'No, they can't possibly go that way, they must have gone this way.'”

Q: I think it's interesting what you said at the beginning about the two women who influenced you and made you determined to get out and see the country and enjoy the country. As you've talked, it's so clear that you did that. Always.

WHITE: I did that. And I always got dug in immediately. I'd always be a little bit homesick for the last post — not for the United States but for the last post, where I had had good friends. Then I always left in tears, because I dug in so, made good friends, and had to say goodbye to them forever.

Q: Yes. But that's part of the life, though.

WHITE: After we retired, my real problem was when Americans would come up to us and say, “Oh, so glad to see you again,” and I'd remember them but I couldn't remember in which country I'd known them.

Q: Yes, because you're seeing them out of context. So you really enjoyed your years very much?

WHITE: Oh, very much. As I say, it was interesting, whatever we did. Then in 1944 we finally got to Peru, with a tremendous staff. The first few months we lived in a rented house, where the former President Benavides had lived. Then the new Embassy residence was finished and we moved into that. We had a Christmas party for the staff. We only invited the families of all the people working in the Embassy and their wives; none of the Military or Naval or AID and other Missions. But with just Embassy we had 13 tables of ten, which was quite different from how we had started. From then on, it wasn't as much fun. That was our last post. We were there for 14 months. An ambassador, as you know, automatically resigns when there's a new administration. Of course Roosevelt died in '45, and when Truman came in, he didn't say anything, Jack forwarded his resignation again.

And then articles began to appear in the local paper that William Pawley would be the new Ambassador. We hadn't heard it. On the third appearance, Jack said, “Pawley, Pawley, why persecutest thou me?” Sure enough, our resignation was accepted and William Pawley was appointed. He came for eight months, then got himself transferred to Brazil. Once there, he began intriguing to become Assistant Secretary for South America. This time he was up against Spruille Braden and he didn't get there. I saw he died just last year.

Q: I was about to ask how long your husband was in the Service?

WHITE: He was in for seven years before we were married. So he had five more posts than I did. We were assigned to the three Baltic countries, so that's three in one. So we had Venezuela, Czechoslovakia — oh, that was fascinating. This is rather interesting,

about the Service. We were in Prague and the Minister was Lewis Einstein who had married a Miss Ralle from Beirut, a very beautiful woman in an Edwardian way. One day a young woman called on us bearing a letter of introduction. It seems that her husband had been vice consul there in 1923-24 and she had been there for six months. I'd never heard of her before. So I said, “You've called on Mrs. Einstein.” No, the Consul General wouldn't allow her, they didn't approve of her. They were former missionaries, they thought Mrs. Einstein was not a good influence on the young woman. So I said, “Well, we'll have to go at once.” So I took her around and introduced her to Mrs. Einstein. And from then on, a charming woman herself, she had a very pleasant time.

We invited the Consul General and his wife to lunch, en famille. We passed wine. They didn't take it, neither did we. “Oh,” they said, “don't let us interfere with your habits.” They were former missionaries. How they got into the Service I don't know, or how he got to be Consul General. The Service had just been amalgamated ...

Q: By the Rogers Act.

WHITE: Up to then, the consulate and the diplomatic were verseparate. They were just beginning to be united.

Q: Did that make a big change in the Service?

WHITE: Yes, I think it did. I came across a letter recently that Jack had written from Russia, to his father in 1915 or '16. He wrote in effect that really the services should be united; that the Consular Service was so much more important than the Diplomatic, that it dealt with economic matters and got to know the people of the country. He felt that the Diplomatic end missed out on so much. Now, of course, they're united.

Q: It's one and the same, now.

WHITE: (laughing) ALL questions are economic now! Except the terrorist one. Fortunately, we had nothing of terrorism. I'd walk everywhere perfectly happily. There was never “security,” we didn't bother about it. I couldn't help but recall, when Nixon went somewhere and the whole street would be blocked off for hours before he was supposed to go through, I was taking a taxi in Paris one evening and a policeman held up his hand. Out from the Palace came the President in a car. There were two men in white ties in the front car and the back car, he was in one in between. As soon as he'd passed by, the traffic resumed. Things have changed so in that respect.

Q: I mentioned that I'd done research at the DACOR Library and was reading in the 1915-16 Biographic Registers, looking up some of the people whose names I recognized. The only women mentioned in there were clerks and they never mentioned when they were born, out of “delicacy.” So you have no way of knowing how old the women were. There were about five that I recognized, Alexander Kirk for instance.

WHITE: Oh yes, Buffy Kirk, I knew him.

Q: He must have been quite a character, wasn't he?

WHITE: Oh he certainly was. He was a charming person, with an amusing way of saying things. And of course he entertained in a very grand way. He always called his mother “Clara”. He was in China when my brother was in Japan, and my mother went out to visit my brother. I always said it wasn't fair — she had two posts to our one. She'd arranged to travel in China. Pierrepont was brought home, meanwhile, so she went and stayed with Clara and Buffy. They'd rented a temple in China, just like “Peking Picnic.” When I came back on leave from India, I stopped off in Berlin and saw him there. He was a delightful person, very refreshing. When we went to India, then Alexander Kirk succeeded Jack. So he was there in 1937-39.

Q: You've done a great deal in conservation and wildlife, haven't you?

WHITE: I've been interested in it. I think that if we don't save our world, it's no use living. I went to a conference in England on “the polluted planet.” They wasted no time describing it, because we all knew that. Everybody had a little idea what we should do. This was a good eight or nine years ago, if not ten. They were very worried, because they said England was importing 60 percent of its food already, and the time would come when the exporting countries wouldn't have anything to export. Already they've had their first food war with Iceland, about codfish, about the shoreline. So they were agitated about it. Some said we must do this, or that; some day they must grow more crops, they mustn't have any more playing fields and shopping centers and cement. They must have birth control. One group said that if you got in contact with the fairies, “the little people,” you could get better things.

There was just every kind of suggestion. Finally someone said anybody in the audience could have five minutes. A young American got up and said he'd been working on a food project in California. “I don't think you need worry,” he said, “about birth control. The climate is changing and by the year 2000 a billion people will have disappeared.” On that note we ended the conference! (both laugh heartily) Actually it was about the time of the first famine in the Sahara — what was the figure, 100,000 people died? And how many people have died in Ethiopia and Chad. Of course that's being helped by the government there. (Remarks about droughts, cycles revealed by tree rings, the Dust Bowl)

Q: You know, I've heard so many fine things about your older brother, Pierrepont, in the Foreign Service and what an outstanding Foreign Service Officer he was. Really brilliant in his field.

WHITE: Yes, he was brilliant. He was brilliant as a boy at school. Mother wanted to send him to Groton. After his tonsils were taken out Pierrepont caught cold and he outgrew his skin. When he was 15 and growing, he'd been in bed and the skin stretched, just like a woman's abdomen gets stretched from having babies. He'd grown so fast, and wasn't able to exercise. So, he was sent to various schools, after Groton, but before that he'd been

sent out to the Ojai Valley, near Santa Barbara, the Thatcher School. Before that he'd attended Pomfret. After Thatcher, to Morristown. By this time he was 14 and the schools didn't like taking students after 13. One of the teachers who'd been at Morristown School said to the school, “If you want to improve your scholarship standing, you'd better take this boy.” Sure enough, he was at the head of his class in everything. He read extraordinarily — he just looked at a page and grasped its content. That ability to grasp the essence of things was, I think, his most extraordinary ability. Of course, I've always read every word, and have to hear it; and if I don't hear it in the right order, it doesn't make sense. I took one of these quick-reading courses where you just run down the middle of the page. Well, it didn't make sense. Now I've got one of these “reading machines” where I put the book in here and it shows on a screen. I don't always get the next line after the last word. If I lose a word, the whole sentence changes; I have to have the right word in the right place. I used to be slow. Now I'm extremely slow. But I still thank the Lord I can read. If I can get it on tape, however, it's that much better because so much faster. Margaret could read 100 pages an hour and know everything she's read. She's also very quick.

Margaret went to a very good school in Argentina. The President Sarmiento had been very much impressed — I think in the 1870s he was president — and he wanted to base their whole educational system on the American. So he sent for five U.S. schoolteachers to set up the educational process for Argentine schools. So Margaret's courses there corresponded with those in [the] U.S. Of course she also studied Argentine geography, Argentine history, and said she got very little else. She wenthere in 1930 until 1933. In the 70s, I met the last one of those first five teachers, who was then 93.

Q: Except for India, did Margaret go with you most of the time?

WHITE: She was always with us. I sent her home to Mother when she was with us in Prague, when she was just two. She was l-l/2 years when we arrived. And her first sentence was in four languages. She knew perfectly well — I'd call her in one language, the maid in another, the cook spoke only Czech, and she played with a little Dutch boy

who spoke French. She had only those words but she put them together, and always spoke the “right” language with each of those people. So she's never had a block against a new language, as so many have. She learned Greek, Portuguese, she spoke Spanish very well.

When we were in Argentina I sent her to an English class where Spanish was the second language. Then I was able to get her into Las Cinco Esquinas, The Five Corners. The upper class, when it was running the country, had said, “We pay taxes, we don't want our children to be brought up in the church schools. We want them to have a secular education, and we want to have a good school for them to go to.” This was the one school for all of the upper class; all the others drew only from their own district. This school was so popular that it had to have a morning and afternoon shift. Fortunately Margaret got into the afternoon shift, because she and I could go riding in the morning, she'd have a rest and lunch and then attend school in the afternoon. It was a wonderful arrangement. When we got to Berlin, she had to be at school at 8 a.m. and wouldn't return until 3 p.m. and would need a rest. By that time, in winter, there was no sunlight. However, we were never without sun for more than one week.

(End Tape II, Side A; Begin Side B)

WHITE: And so I was already 19 or 20 bthen. Actually I never voted unti(trying to recollect) my first vote, for Harding. In 1927 when we came home I was able to vote; was never able to vote before because I was abroad, and we didn't have absentee ballot voting then.

Q: You said you had the “debutante slouch” but what about the liberation of the Jazz Age, and the Flapper Age — did you bob your hair and ...

WHITE: Well, there again, I didn't do any of those — you see, I had a very sheltered life, a very conservative life. What my mother said “went” automatically. It never occurred to me to question anything my mother said. I remember one timduring World War I that I went with a friend of mine to the dansant. She was interested in some man, I went with a blind

date. When I came back I was very warm. And Mother said, “Why are you so warm?” I said, “I've been dancing.” She was perfectly horrified. I said, “Well, I went with Helen. She could go.” And Helen said she went with me and I could go. Helen was brought up by her aunt, who was much older than Mother, who respected her, and vice versa. So we played them off against each other. But it never occurred to me to do any of those “liberated” things. I never smoked a cigarette until I was married, nor did I powder my nose until I was married. When I got to Argentina, I realized I had to use makeup, otherwise I looked too awful. It took me three days to get used to putting on lipstick! The only color available was orange, which suited the Argentinian women's dark complexion. After a glass of wine, my cheeks would get purple; the mix of colors was awful. (laughter) I didn't cut my hair until we got to Riga. There was a German woman who cut her hair and it made her look so much better that I decided — I said, “Jack, I want to cut my hair.” He said, “You can do exactly as you choose.” And of course when I cut it, he was furious. They were having a small fancy dress party with masks. To show his disapproval of my haircut, he decided to go as a Flapper. Just recently I came across the costume we made for him. He had a mustache, then, so we had a little extra material from the dress to make a little petticoat for his mask to cover the mustache. When we arrived, a very little man with a face mask offered Jack his arm. I forget what I wore; perhaps as a peasant girl with an apron, very simple. I didn't dare cut it short enough. We'd been married for three or four years by that time.

I saw Irene Castle, once. And oh, she was exquisite, perfectly exquisite. And she wore a lovely flowing green chiffon dress with full skirt and simple waist; not very different from what we're wearing now. Of course, she didn't wear a girdle, which was unheard of, or any bra — she didn't need one. She and Vernon Castle did dance beautifully together. I went, recently, to the exhibition of costumes at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. They had an exhibit called “The Dance”, showing pictures of various dances, and dresses. There was one of Irene Castle's that was a sort of Bo-Peep style. It was absolutely the kind of thing she never wore. I think the reason it was still extant was because she didn't wear it, i.e., wear it out, like others. So I was disappointed to see that costume of hers instead

of something identified with “Irene Castle.” It was a sort of pink, whereas she wore vivid colors. It just wasn't her at all. That led me to the conclusion that it's only the dresses you don't like that survive. (they laugh)

We had a flood in our basement in New York this year, a broken water main. I had several trunks that contained a quantity of dresses that I'd kept. I remembered how I enjoyed dressing up in my Grandmother's clothes. But I was never around where my grandchildren could use them. There was one that I'd gotten at Poiret in Paris. There were tears in the sleeve and skirt but it had a coat, which could cover it, so the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute finally accepted it. I've got all these dresses, I don't know what to do with them. There is my mother's wedding dress of 1895. My own was so hideous I didn't do anything about it. My mother's dressmaker made it; she made it, I think, for Mother's matronly figure — not mine. It was just ugly to begin with and I felt miserable in it. She fixed the train coming from the belt instead as part of the skirt, so I could wear the dress again. Of course I didn't want to wear it again. I have it still.

I have another thing that's interesting; and I'm not sure what to do with it. It's a uniform that Jack wore in Russia. It's blue, like an old naval uniform, with lots of gold on it. He had a little imitation sword, and a fore-and-aft hat with fringe. He wore that because the Russians wouldn't accept the waiter's costume that we wore.

Q: So he had to have a special outfit to be ...

WHITE: I don't know the answer to that. I think the Association for Diplomatic Studies are doing a museum.

Q: I think they would like that, yes. And I think they would like some of your gowns too, because we'll be part of that museum and they would like some of the gowns that you wore as ...

WHITE: I've got the dress I wore at the White House but it's not worth keeping. We came up from Haiti to Washington on a short leave and then found that President Lescot was coming, so Jack had to be at the dinner to accompany him at the White House when Roosevelt was President. So I went to Woodward & Lothrop's and found the only dress I could wear, a pale blue chiffon. I had no jewelry with me but I got a necklace of big pearls and pink flowers, etc. and gave a little color to it. After the dinner when the ladies went to another room, Laura Houghteling, Mrs. Roosevelt's secretary, said, “You don't really want your price tag to show?” It read “$4.” Here was Mrs. Joe Davies, Marjorie Merriweather Post, with diamonds this big on. (hearty laughter)

Q: What a lovely story! And really, that gown is the essence of the Foreign Service — here you were just up from Haiti.

WHITE: Well, the only trouble is, the color's faded, that's why I said it's pathetic. I've got other things that I've tried to remember where I wore them — whether to the Viceroy's party. I had one perfectly lovely dress which I think I got from Patou in Paris — in those days, you'd go to Paris, look at the costume, and you'd buy a dress. I never was well dressed in Paris because it would take me two weeks to decide on the dress I wanted, then one week for it to be made, and then I'd go home with it. But I mean, one didn't have to pay a fortune for it the way one does now. It isn't as absurd as might seem because the people buying now are going to copy it, they're buying the design. But in those days people just went and got clothes at the different dressmakers. It was fascinating. So this is a lovely dress. It was in 1925, I think. It had a big bow of jade green sequins that sat on the belt, which came down the back, and the most exquisite velvet you can imagine, heavenly to touch. But it didn't have the label, so the Museum wasn't interested in it. Actually, the Poiret dress didn't have it either, but the coat did. They went together. Some of the others, that I wore in Calcutta, were made by a local dressmaker. We used to clean them with gasoline! After I left, I heard that one of the women whom I knew had been on a dance floor, when somebody with a cigarette ... She went up in flames. The men put their coats

around her, did everything they could. She lingered for five days. As I've said, all these things happen after I've gone.

Q: I think that the Association for Diplomatic Studies (ADS) would be very interested in some of your dresses. Even though the one that you wore at the White House is faded, because it's such a Foreign Service story, of hastily arriving, having to run down to Woodward & Lothrop to buy something to wear. And then the price tag showing — that's wonderful.

WHITE: I wore the necklace last winter because it's very much like the things we were wearing — these toques with the great big flowers and things; practically the same thing. I wore it once or twice just for fun. In some things, though, the color is all gone.

Q: I don't think that's important, I think what's important is the story that goes with the dress. Really. And for ADS, it would be the association between the gown and where you wore it, and in what capacity.

WHITE: Then I have some very pretty dresses of the 50s, from Bendel's in New York, before they went haywire. Those dresses didn't get wet, so they're just as fresh and new as can be. I wore those after we'd retired, so I don't think they'd have any point, you see, except as a type of clothes one wore then. As I say, I have all these dresses. As of now, they're hanging up on hooks. Some of them have beebeautifully put away — I got a conservator to fix my mother's wedding dress. She washed it in distilled water but I notice the satin lost some of its stiffness as a result. The satin of the dress I wore in Calcutta is lovely, very pretty “in the hand”, but no longer has the body it used to. Well, you've given me an idea. Now it's all carefully put away, so I'll have to see.

In some of the trunks there was nothing but papers. So my grandson went down and put everything out. We came into the big dining room and saw papers everywhere, with chairlegs thold down the corners. We found blueprints of the house that the Henry Whites built next door to Meridian House, that Meridian House just bought. Ambassador Jova said

he'd be thrilled to have them. Margaret took them down to him. We were told to roll them on the outside of a tube — they wouldn't go into a tube. There were 24 sheets, some of the designs actually done by John Russell Pope himself.

Q: Did Pope design the Henry White house also?

WHITE: Yes.

Q: Because he did Meridian House, didn't he?

WHITE: That was later.

Q: And then he did the Masonic temple across the [Sixteenth] street from us here, in 1912 I believe.

WHITE: It was 1912 that he did the Whites' house. I think Meridian came a little later. One is 18th century English, the other is 18th century French. The French one has a courtyard in front and the garden behind. Of course, the lay of the land is different too, but you drove up through the garden to the house and there was just a little terrace in the back. It onchad a beautiful view of Washington, overlooking Mrs. Henderson's house. We invited her to dinner one Christmas. It was during Prohibition. We had plum pudding with whisky on it; it was borne in flaming. We had one without whisky for her. She sai(imitating brisk tone of voice), “What's this, what's this? I never said we couldn't use alcohol for flavoring.” (both laugh)

Q: What was she like?.

WHITE: She was over 90 at that time. She had a little dancing class that was good exercise, just doing the fox trot around the room. I didn't really get to know her very well. I went there to dinner one night. It was of course vegetarian. She had a huge round table with a red baize cover, and then lovely lace things in series around — I mean, for a small table it would be of such-and-such size, add another one for a bigger, etc. Very effective.

But I think there was a dome to the dining room, because you didn't hear the person over there, or here, but you heard the person over there. I'm afraid I made remarks about the food, my partner and I. (both laugh heartily)

Q: I think it's a shame that house was torn down.

WHITE: Well, I'm glad they've kept the Smithsonian Castle, which is the same period. And rather better. It was an ugly period — gloomy, dark wood everywhere inside.

In Poland, Hugh Gibson rented the Adam Zamoyski palace for the Legation, right after World War I. He was in the family residence and the officers were in the wings— Jack had a room up in the old ballroom and he had a tub that was about that deep and about four feet long, which rested on feet, the water coming in and a bucket underneath. I always wondered how if he got into it, how he'd get out. Then there was another wing which had been occupied in 1863 — Chopin was dead by then, but his piano was there. In that year there was a sort of revolution and his piano was thrown out the window. Margaret heard this story and when she came back from school in Buenos Aires, she said, “There's going to be a revolution. I'm going to throw the piano out the window.” She was eight at the time.

We had quite a time with the revolution in Argentina, because Jack went down to see what was going on. I had my typewriter. I'd write to Mother (I haven't found the letter but it must be somewhere) and say, “There's a plane flying overhead.” Then suddenly our car came up the street about 60 miles an hour, then stopped. Jack had told our French chauffeur, who'd been through the first World War — now it's 10 or 11 years later — that if any trouble started, save the car. So the chauffeur drove on the sidewalk and came up; he'd saved the car. Meanwhile, Jack and our naval attach# had gone down to see what was happening. The Revolution was being carried out by General Uriburu and the students of the Academy. Everything went well until they finished, then they were shooting. The crowd “fell back,” as Jack put it, and one man who was a relative of someone we knew, was trampled to death. My guitar teacher, a very rotund little man, said he was watching

the goings-on and got a lamppost between him and the shooting, and of course he stuck out both front and back. Then he saw a streetcar, thought he'd go to that, and when he got there the floor was swarming with people. Jack and the naval attach# reached a store just as its shutters were going down. There they were, imprisoned, staying there quite some time until the shooting ceased, then they came home. Telling the story, at that point where Jack said, “The crowd fell back,” the naval attach# asked, “Is THAT what he said? We RAN.” The attach# was chunky; I'm surprised he kept up with Jack's long legs.

Two days later the telephone — ours and everyone's — rang, everyone was telephoning to such an extent — rumorwere flying around that the troops were coming back into town. But nobody knew which side they were on. One man whom I knew, with a big house on the Avenida Alvear which was the big main street, sat in the middle of his hall with his gun, ready to shoot anyone trying to come in. The troops, it turned out, were pro-new regime. Word went around that Irigoyen's people had taken over the post office and “the Pink House,” as they call it. All these rumors were circulating. Both these buildings were held by the new government, and someone fired from the post office at the Casa Rosada, which in turn fired back, and they continued to fire. So finally Uriburu came out to say, without his cap, “Look out, we've got it here, we're all right, and stop the shooting.” So the attempted counter-attack failed.

We were going to go that night to see Mistinguette of the famous legs. (laughing) She must have been pretty old by then. Someone told us the counter-revolution had started and of course the theater was closed, so we didn't go out that night at all. Then there were other revolutions — in Brazil, in Bolivia, and in Peru. Two or three weeks later we were staying with our Minister at the legation residence next to the War College in La Paz. In the early morning there was a BOOM, followed by weird music, which stopped, but I thought the counter-revolution had started up there. No; they were only celebrating the spring equinox!

Q: You've maintained a marvelous sense of humor throughout all of this. (laughing) Did you feel that you had to?

WHITE: I enjoyed everything, that was it. (End of tape II. They adjourn for tea)

We got to Haiti before we entered the War, so we had lots of tourists coming to visit us. One, who had just lost her husband, had come down with a friend on a ship, telephoned to the Legation, asking to speak to Jack or to me. She was told the Minister was out at present, “and Mme. White was upcountry with Br'er Rabbit.” She knew my brother Pierrepont but she didn't know I had a brother Abbot. (both laugh heartily) We visited the famous Sans Souci, the castle of Henri Christophe then we went on to the Riviere Massacre , which is the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. There was no bridge, so the car got stuck. A lot of men came from nowhere and we got on their backs. I was on the back of this great big man and of course my brother Abbot photographed us. This man carried us across and pulled the car through, and we went on to the Dominican Republic.

We also went up to the coast and came back through the center. We took various trips through Haiti that were interesting but we never got to J#r#mie which I'd like to have seen. But we were also there too soon to see the paintings on thEpiscopal Cathedral in Haiti. An American man named Peter-something had started an art school down there and he just gave them paints and paper and said to go ahead and paint.

Q: Is that how Haitian primitive art began?

WHITE: Right. They just started painting. He was an American and I think came down from one of the organizations — I never can get people straight. There was another one who came down, also, to develop their handicrafts. There was a lady, Clementine Douglas, who came down also to develop their handicrafts. She told me how she was trying to weave with some reeds and how much difficulty she had. Years before a friend

of my mother had given me a tablecloth of pina cloth from the Philippines and told me, “You know, they weave it under water.” So when Douglas told me of her problem, I asked, “Have you tried weaving it under water?” She hadn't, so she went back and found it worked perfectly. That was an instance where I was helpful without really knowing anything about it.

Q: How did weaving under water help?

WHITE: Then it didn't break, it became more pliable. The man Peter-something (I'll try to give you his name later) started the art school just as we were leaving. There were several American blacks who came in, professors. It was the first time I'd ever met an educated American black, and I found it extremely interesting. They spoke beautiful French, they were professors, and I was amazed. Later, in Peru, there was an American professor who had come from Hampton Institute in Virginia, who had been chosen by, I think, President Prado. They were having trouble bringing Peruvian Indians into the navy. The Spanish descendants looked down on the Indians. The situation had parallels with ours, and he thought the Hampton man would know how to integrate the two. What he was doing was teaching the Spanish ones how to use their hands. Normally, when they had a problem, they'd write what had to be done. He would say, “No, I want you to do it yourselves, use the machinery and make it work.” They had never done this before, the hands-on approach.

There was a remarkable American who was still there, in Peru, Dr. Albert Giesecke. This was a man who'd come down to Peru as a young man of 26. He had met and talked several times with President Leguia, the dictator, and as he was leaving the President said, “Why do you go? I'd like you to become rector of the university.” The universithad been closed for three years; I think it was the university up at Cuzco. So this young man of 26 became rector of the university. He'd take his students on archeological expeditions. Once they were going up t(tries to recall) — well, Hiram Bingham had just discovered Machu Picchu, so they went there. “We've got to get across, so we'll build a bridge.” Well,

the students had never before done anything with their hands. He knew how to do it and he had them make a bridge — they had to cut down the trees, do everything just so; and they made that bridge. This was an example of how he made them do things, which had never been done before. All those young men that he worked with at first were now people of importance. They were head judge, head this, head that and the other, when we were there. We were going out to Cuzco and he came with us — actually, we were accompanying him, because everybody greeted him — all his former students who'd become so important were thrilled to see him again. He was quite a remarkable man. That was an instance of the hands-on approach. He was famous.

Q: I'm trying to recall when Bingham discovered Machu Picchu.

WHITE: 1910 or 1911. I was in school, then, but before we went to Peru, I read the book he wrote about it. My “escape reading” was archeology. Anything in that line has always fascinated me. The nicest thing about it there's so much imagination to it. (she laughs) Each time you learn a little bit more, and each time it fits in. This same man — we came down to that fascinating place, Pachacamac, down on the shore not far from Pisac. It's very dry there, and they'd found a great many burials. We were there early on when the assistant of the famous archeologist who founded the museum was there — her name was Dr. Carrion. There's a name I couldn't forget! (both laugh) They created the most remarkable textures. They even used cobwebs for weaving; and hair. It was amazing. A woman who was expert in weaving had come down from the U.S. and was trying to teach the people how to weave again from this idea.

There were two Peruvian sisters, one of whom did beautiful sewing, the other an artist. Before she went to Paris she visited the man who founded the museum, who'd discovered these mummies — wish I could remember his name — and in the museum she'd drawn notebooks full of designs from these pre-Inca. In France, she went to the third generation oJean Charles Worth and said she could do designs for him. He asked her what sort, and she took one little head like that and made an all-over design with it. That so fascinated

him that he engaged her. She was with him in the 1920s and did all sorts of things for him. Given Jack's initials to work into a design, she said, “That's easy. I've done them for Jean Charles Worth!” (they laugh) She did blockprinting and gave him a lovely scarf of the finest wool with those initials which I think she'd made for Jean Charles Worth. With the monogram, she made some doilies for me and the other sister did all the embroidered borders and the artist did the blockprinting, adding “'45”, because it was the year of the peace, and also the year that we departed. I still have the doilies but the blockprinting has been washed out.

When we had peace in Peru, Jack persuaded them that they ought to do something in celebration. The church down there, curiously enough, was very pro-German. The wife of the President, Mme. Prado, wife of the President, was very “in” with the church but her husband favored the Americans and the Allies. Peru entered the war at the very last minute, so we had a big Te Deum at the cathedral. I remember very well that a junior priest rather than the archbishop preached the sermon. He said how wonderful it was that Peru's shores had been spared the horrors of war, and it was all due to the intercession of St. Rose of Lima. (they laugh)

Peru was an interesting post. It was not terribly strategic, of course. I'd been there once before, in 1928. Leguia was put out of office in 1930. I think I told you that the Ambassador, Alexander P. Moore, refused to use the Counselor — Matthew Hanna was not allowed to come into the Embassy at all. He was using the Vice Consul. There weren't too many others on the staff back in 1928. 1924 was when the diplomatic and consular services came together. In 1930 there were revolutions all over South America and Leguia was put out. He was a very benevolent dictator and really built up the country. But he was put out like all the other dictators. We went back 17 years later, in '44. We were there only 14 months. It was during the War, so there wasn't much outside contact and I didn't go back and forth, stayed there most of the time. It was an interesting time. The German influence had been rather strong there in the 30s. I think Peru was one of the countries the Germans had tried to cultivate during that period. By the time we got there, in '44, the

Peruvians had locked up the Germans. And their shops were on the blacklist. I gave a lunch for Mme. Prado and was very much upset, didn't quite know what to do when she said, “That reminds me, I must go down to such-and-such a shop and get a cross for the archbishop.” I hesitated before saying, “I'm glad I reminded you but I don't think I'd suggest that you go to this particular shop.” It was on the blacklist, you see. That's why I was so hesitant.

We went up to Cuzco with Dr. Giesecke and then I went later with Margaret and the sister-in-law of the President's son. The son had married an American named Natalie Kitchen; I think the sister-in-law, who was unmarried, was named Marion. We went up together and had a fascinating time going all around. We stopped off at Arequipa at the Quinta Bates which we thought was highly over-rated but probably was the only place people could stay then. It had a central covered patio, with rooms opening off it, which made it awkward if you wanted to retire early. One day we got up to Puno, which is around 12,000 feet — “now we've got to go slowly.” We found that the higher we got, the less it bothered us. And this time it didn't bother me much. I told this to Margaret, then forgot about it, and was walking along at my usual pace. Margaret said, “I thought you said we must go slowly.” Then I remembered to do so. But when we got back on the train, her heart was beating 120. She was engaged to be married, and I had to decide whether we should go straight back or proceed on. I remembered that when I was in Cuzco I'd had a cold and my heart rate had been 125. So I decided we should go on. She became quiet on the train and was all right.

Then we came to the pass we had to go over, which was at 15,000, and then we'd go down to 10,000 at Cuzco. And of course Margaret's heart acted up again and I said, “Dear, what am I going to say to poor Tap?” I didn't say anything else to her. So we were very quiet when we got to Cuzco. We stayed in a little hotel and they brought up hot water for baths, which they regarded as extraordinary but all three of us wanted them. While she stayed quietly the wife of the prefect came around to call on us with her two daughters.

Margaret began telling them about Casanova and Mme. Prefect hastily removed her daughters. (both laugh)

Then we went to the Museum and we saw this lovely furniture. We'd seen a lovely house behind the trees — we didn't see really what it looked like but it looked like a pleasant place to be. “We'll take that house with that and that.” We said, “We'll take this, and that” and had a lovely time furnishing that house. I mentioned it to someone just for fun and suddenly I realized she thought I was serious. And they said, “Well, the Americans — you might expect. They'd come and take things out of our museums!” So I said, “No, this was just for fun.”

In 1930 I'd gone down with Jack to Machu Picchu when the railroad only went as far as a bridge — I think the one I mentioned the young man had had built — and there was a cement platform, and the walls were burlaand there were army cots — that was our hotel. We spent the night there. We walked up to Machu Picchu but we didn't go up Huana Picchu. When we came back, in '44 when Jack was Ambassador, I think we drove up to the hotel. And then we walked up Huana Picchu, and they thought it was extraordinary that an ambassador could do that. They didn't realize Jack was a great walker. But when we first came, the country was very primitive.

I haven't told you much about Haiti. Shortly after we got there Lescot came in, a real politician and his son, in his 30s, was the foreign minister. He had daughters. Margaret was entertaining them and she asked, “How does one seat a dinner when you — it's all right for you when you've got all those diplomats, but we have no rank, and you've got to be careful not to put somebody next to someone she isn't speaking to, you have to be sure to put them next to one they do love.” (she laughs) So we tried a system suggested by a friend of my father-in-law. Instead of doing crossword puzzles, she amused herself “seating” dinners in Heaven. She'd take people from all periods — for example, famous lovers. Romeo and Juliet of course had no rank at all. (hearty laughter) So I've used that amusement now and again and Margaret used that for her friends. When we got to

Tangier, there were 23, total, of the various American groups there; and two women for every man. So Romeo had two Juliets. The Consul General was seated next to me, and his wife seated next to Jack, and the rest of the table was “seeded” according to the rank of the people in Heaven. Margaret used that many times later on.

Q: I wish I'd known about that during my career!

WHITE: It was a great help. I sat next to a Mr. Molinari in Buenos Aires five times in the course of the winter. Neither of us had anything to say to the other to begin with.

Q: That's happened to my husband — to sit next to the same lady at successive dinner parties, so you run out of things to say very quickly. By the third dinner party, you really don't know what to talk about at all — especially if you don't speak her language very well to begin with.

WHITE: In Lithuania, when we went down to Kaunas on national holidays, we would stay with our Consul, Ed Carlson. I heard that two or three years later, he reportedly said, “She said, 'We're having dinner with so-and-so tonight.' 'Ohhhh!' he said, 'then I'll have to sit next to so-and-so. And if I do, she'll say thus-and-so, and if she does I'll scream!' And he went there to dinner, he did sit next to her, she did say it, and he did scream!” He had a real breakdown. I ran into him later on when he was Consul in Tallinn. In '35 when I went with Marie (Mrs. Truxton) Beale to Russia, we flew from Helsinki to Tallinn and then had to go by train. By this time they'd been divorced. But you see, there was nothing in a small place like Kaunas,. It was just that nobody could speak Lithuanian, and it was a small group, and they kept seeing each other again and again, all the time. And following strict protocol, you always sat next to the same person.

Q: You mentioned one of those parties in Riga and you said it was the best one you gave, because everyone was speaking Russian, and you said there were some Americans there.

WHITE: The Americans were my husband and myself, a man who was economic or trade, and his wife, and one other man who was in intelligence. Those were the five Americans who spoke Russian. Jack started Russian when he was in Petrograd, as St. Petersburg was called until 1897. He'd kept it up, he always wanted to go back, as an authority on Russia — so they sent him to Argentina. Then, afterwards, he was rather glad to get away from it. I'd always wanted to learn Russian. I didn't learn Czech because I thought it would be confusing, they're too much alike. So when we got to Riga I got an excellent Russian teacher. She was known as “Mrs. Davis.” She had been Countess Kleinmichel, who married an Englishman to get a passport to get her children out of Russia — her husband had been killed, I think in front of her. She'd gotten out through Yalta.

She had tremendous facility with languages; she could speak five perfectly. And she was a very good teacher — so good that, after she taught a member of the British Legation, he arranged for her to teach their interpreters. To teach them, she had to bone up on Naval terms! Perhaps she taught them as well as the Frenchman, who'd learned his English in England, and had come to the U.S. with a mission right after World War II. He said, “We must have corn!” So we sent them corn. And the French said, “What will we do with this awful flour?” This “corn” wasn't wheat.

There are a lot of things I could talk about, but they don't have any bearing on the foreign service life. But on the other hand, that's what life was.

Q: That's what life was, so it's hard to separate the two, really.

WHITE: We always traveled. I think I've said that we traveled all over India. (Fenzi confirms) Did I tell you about going to Ajmer and the AGG (Adjutant Governor General) said, “Now, tomorrow I can take you to see the lake.” And I said, “If you really want to please me, will you allow me to go to the All-India Music Festival, which is taking place there tomorrow?” And he said, “As long as you don't make me go!” (laughter) When he first took me in and introduced me to some Indian people on the front row — he didn't

know them, but he said, “This is the wife of the American Consul in Calcutta and she wants to hear your music,” they were delighted, you see. Of course they all spoke English because they had done their lessons in English, they explained to me about the different kinds of music. One man came from Qatar. First of all, somebody recited a verse from the Mahabarata, their sacred scriptures. To begin with, moving the muscles of his neck to the rhythm. Then he danced a big dance to the rhythm of a drumbeat with his whole body, making the sleighbells on the calves of his legs jingle, while the other man was, I think, still reciting the verse. Then he did the whole thing over without the sound, not a single bell moving. It was a tour de force.

Then there were travidian dancers, very stylized. Then there were dancers from Tanjore, very lyrical, I think they had masks. Different instruments came into play — it was all fascinating. A year or two later, my mother came over to Calcutta. Her aunt had just died, she didn't want to do anything. I said, “Mother, you've come halfway around the world, you've got to see India. I won't make you go out with the British colony but you've got to see India.” I said, “We'll go to see an Indian dancer.” When we got there, we found the theater practically empty. The English weren't going to attend, but neither were the Indians. When I saw the performance, I realized why: she had studied in Paris and put on the performance and had all the stylized motions, whereas the Indian dance was religious and the dancer was just the instrument, you mustn't put yourself over — as she was doing — it's the dance that's conveys the meaning. Having seen the real thing, I recognized the false one, although Mother wouldn't have known. The French-trained artist was charming — she had ballet, beautiful costumes; perfect for France but not in India.

Q: I'm very interested in having you just talk about your interests and the things that you did, because it's so different from the Service today. It's a very valuable record. It seems to me that a great deal of your time was spent in the arts in the local community — you were interested in them, you were interested in travel in the country, you were interested in

entertaining the people. And in doing all of those, you were representing the United States. It was a very natural extension of your personality in a way, wasn't it? It wasn't arduous.

WHITE: As a matter of fact, my brother Abbot went out to India in 1948 with his wife and they stopped at the Consulate General. Of course, in between India had become independent, so the Consul General was no longer the ranking American official in India, as my husband had been. But my sister-in-law turned to him and asked, “Do you get around the country very much? “ And he replied, “No, I don't. There was a man named White who evidently got around because people from up country are still coming in and asking for him.” We'd been all over. But you see, it was an unhealthy post, which we got because the man initially assigned there and his wife were afraid of germs and didn't accept it. We jumped at it, of course. We had two months local leave, and Jack being topdog could take it when he wanted to. He was also supervising Consul General for Karachi, which was part of India then. We'd go to Karachi and see the sights in the vicinity. We'd take perhaps two weeks' leave to do this. Then we'd go to Madras, and use the opportunity to see all the sights there.

Among other places we saw was cochin where black Indian Jews came from ...

(End of Tape III, Side A; Begin Tape III, Side B)

Q: What years were these?

WHITE: 1937. It was the l0th anniversary of the King who was the son of Amanullah who'd been driven out by the water carrier, then returned to celebration. We saw the Khafirs — the word means “infidels” — who were dressed in knee-length khaki tunics trimmed around the bottom with the Greek Key, and rather full Persian-style trousers fastened at the knee and ankle. They came in dancing to a flute and a little drum like that. And they made a circle, did their dance, then marched out dancing as they went. And the thing was all over

But the Afghan dancers strolled on, with a slightly larger drum but no flute, the six of them did their whirling and waited, the thing was over. I was told that these Khafirs, they believe, were the descendents of the Bactrian army of the Hellenic age — the Greek Key, their using chairs to sit on rather than squatting as the Afghans do, and that they were animists. Now, of course, the Afghans are trying to Muslimize them and we probably would not be seeing them again. Seeing them at that time was an extraordinary thing; they were fascinating.

There were certain advantages of serving in the “early days.” But felt that we were frightfully late, when one reads about those extraordinary Victorian women who were traveling all around ...

Q: That's a whole other story, isn't it.

WHITE: I mentioned that in Siam Jack had attended the very first dinner party which Siamese wives attended. And that 20 years later the wives were so chic — (Fenzi confirms) but they were in national costume. Thirty years later I went back and didn't see a single costume, they all wore European dress.

Finally, in India, one tried to recognize the different types of sari to guess which part of the country one came from. Now, they're mixed up, not so regional as before.

Q: How could you tell the region? The way they tied the skirt, the way they dyed the material, or ... ?

WHITE: I'm trying to think... I think they wound the skirt, then the end would come over the head — I can't remember whether the sari went this way or that way. And the Parsee would play tennis in her sari, but the other hand was free, so I think it came over this way. The Indians would always put on slacks, they would never wear European dress. The Eurasians did, but the Indians to this day always wear the sari, which is becoming to them.

Q: But to play tennis in one ... !

WHITE: Well, you have the fullness here. And if you have the thing coming this way — anyway, she was able to do it. But then in south Indithey wore trousers and overskirt. They wear different clothes in different parts of the country.

I heard about one party at the International Club, or maybe it was the Cosmopolitan, where they had all the nations of India represented at the YWCA, and they had a great time dressing up in each other's clothes. The Friday Club was for the daughters of the women in purdah; the daughters were in business and they met young men, but they couldn't bring the young men home. They couldn't have a natural relationship. So the YWCA formed the Friday Club where the young girls could meet under proper auspices.

There are two things I remember about the YWCA. The other one occurred to me the other day when I came across a costume I had made for the 60th anniversary of the founding of the British YWCA. I was on the Board. We had tableaux vivants, and I was in the one for 1910 or 1912, so I had a big hat, a long skirt on the way to being a hobble skirt. That was the only time I took an interest in social work, but I don't think there was much; whatever was done was done through the church. In Argentina there was the Beneficencia, an organization of certain families which would dispense money from the government, but they didn't do any actual work. I had an unmarried friend who, later, founded a home for unmarried mothers; she was sorry for these girls who had no husbands. She was very autocratic about i(she laughs), so I don't know how much the girls enjoyed being in this sort of environment.

I saw her later, she came to this country several times. She came up once after attending a conference and, in thinking about women, she said when they came to the question in the conference of talking about prostitution, every country said there was none in their country. She was trying to persuade them that there was and they must do something about it.

She and her married sister both went, separately (not being on speaking terms at the time) to Rome in 1950 for the Marian Year — the year the Assumption of the Virgin was made a dogma. The old Pope, Pius XI, was ill. Thmarried sister was seated on the platform among a number of American Bishops. To the question of who would be the next Pope if anything happened to Pius, somebody said that “if Cardinal Spellman gets it, the whole place will be different, Heaven forbid!” (laughter)

She went to see the Pope because she had discovered she had cancer and wanted to know if she should give up her work, what to do about it. The Pope was busy but his secretary — the Monsignor who later became Pope — saw her and said, “We must ask Holy Mother.” So then and there the two of them went down on their knees in the office and prayed. Then he said, “I think that you should keep on with your work. She'll take care of you so that you won't suffer if you continue.” Eventually she organized and incorporated the home, and her sister — by now they were on speaking terms — was on the board.

[interval, after which tape resumes mid-sentence]

Q: What they now call “generalists.” But most people aren't that. That's what Guido Fenzi did. We went from Africa to South America to Europe to the Caribbean. But it was much less common in our time. Most people spent a large part of their career in, for instance, South America or ...

WHITE: Well, the idea is, you've got your language.,

Q: But you miss quite a bit if you're kept to one region.

WHITE: Oh, you miss an awful lot. Of course the point of moving people around is to give them background, because these political-appointee ambassadors get so engrossed in their own problems, they think “this is it,” and they haven't got the background to know what is general and what is not. So that's the whole point of moving officers around.

Q: Back in your day, when you moved by ship, your voyages were leisurely, there was no hopping on a jet in Calcutta and arriving in ...

WHITE: Oh, we did. We flew as far as Baghdad. Then we took the train out to Ankara, then to Istanbul, and took the Orient Express, which was not the romantic thing it's portrayed. It's what you bring to a thing always. (more laughter) I remember hearing two people talk about the same thing. One woman made it so romantic. Of course, that was my problem — it always was “ordinary” “everyday.” I said I couldn't write because everything was perfectly “normal.” (she laughs).

(End Tape III, Side B; Begin Tape IV, Side A)

Continuation of interview: Monday, July 10, 1989

Q: I hope today to talk more about your tour in Germany in the early 1930s, 1933-34, when your husband was at the embassy in Berlin. It was the time of the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Hitler's Nazi Germany.

I'd like to ask you one thing before we move on to 1933 and Berlin. I noticed that President Harding had been a guest at the White's house on Crescent Place. You were not there then? (White confirms) Harding was President when you came into the Foreign Service?

WHITE: He was the only President I ever voted for until we retired, because we didn't have a definite residence, therefore we couldn't vote all those years. So the only one I ever voted for was thRepublican candidate, Harding. (she laughs) Not very good.

Q: Well, you were young! There was mention that he was Henry White's guest at the house on Crescent Place [The White-Meyer house at 1624 Crescent Place, NW, was designed for Henry White by architect John Russell Pope as the White's Washington, DC, pied # terre. In 1934 the house was sold to Agnes and Eugene Meyer of The Washington Post. The mansion is now part of Meridian House International. John Russell Pope, was

also the architect for the National Gallery West Wing and the Jefferson Memorial, and Meridian House, among other Washington landmarks.

WHITE: Mr. White married Mrs. Sloane in 1920, and they came down to Washington in the spring for two months, or a month or two, and possibly in the fall, and did their entertaining then. Then they'd go back to live in New York or Lenox. When Mr. White's first wife died, he rented the Crescent Place house to Senator Gerry [Peter Goelet Gerry, Democrat, Rhode Island]. Perhaps he didn't right away, I don't know; because at one point he gave the house to the French Mission; his first wife died in 1916. So perhaps he didn't do it until after that. But I know that Senator Gerry of Rhode Island did live there, had rented it. During World War I, he lived in the small house, I think 1221 - 21st Street. Then later he got the house at 2139 R Street. The new Mrs. White didn't want to live in that little house — she wa(laughing) a Vanderbilt. So they moved back to Crescent Place in the spring, and then in April or May they went off to London. I remember the date of our marriage was very much hurried so that he could attend it. (laughing)

Q: So he would still be in the United States when you were married.

WHITE: Oh yes. They were spending the winter — she had a house on Fifth Avenue. At first they lived in the old Sloane house on 52nd Street just off Fifth Avenue. They sold that and bought the house that had belonged to people named Mason. It's still there, between 66th and 67th Street, between two big apartment houses. It is now the Yugoslav mission to the UN. The Havemeyer house used to be on the corner. So then they'd come down to Washington in the spring and possibly in the fall. They married in the autumn of 1920, and we were married in the spring of 1921. From then on, that was their routine. She was very much a lady of routine. They'd live in New York City in the winter, they'd come down in the spring to Crescent Place, they'd go to England for him to see all his friends there, they'd go up to Lennox, and then repea(she laughs) with the seasons.

Q: Let's skip ahead now if we could to Germany. I have so many questions about Berlin in 1933. I've been reading William Shirer's "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich" and I thought it would be valuable for our project to have on tape your impressions of Berlin in the 1930s. I believe that you took over a house from a Jewish family who had fled?

WHITE: Yes. Through an agent we rented a house they had left. It was a beautiful house with a garden right off the Tiergartenstrasse. You see, the nobility never had houses in Berlin the way they do in London. They lived on their country property, and they'd come into Berlin. To compete with the Ritz in London, the Emperor built the big Hotel Adlon and the nobility would stay there. They'd come for two or three weeks. But after World War I, when the republican regime came in, the nobility never set foot in Berlin again until Hitler came. They thought Hitler was going to restore the monarchy. (she laughs) I was going to bring that up later.

Q: Everything I've read should have warned people that it was just the opposite, because with successive elections his party kept gaining more and more strength. Yet the nobility continued to believe he was going to be their champion.

WHITE: Maybe they thought he was going to bring in the nobility. They had an organization called the Steel Helmet organization, which was the conservative right, which a great many of the nobility were in. They were the ones — I think, though I'm not sure, that Baron Thyssen — who made a fortune in armaments as a result of World War I — supported him, and that was his idea. But of course you must remember: the "big lie" was Hitler's weapon. He probably told the nobility that. I don't know if he did, but I wouldn't put it past him, you see. The Communists do the same thing — to lie is one of their ways of doing things.

Q: But when you arrived, did you really find the economy in ruins? I have visions of ...

WHITE: Remember, I had been there during the great inflation. We [both] arrived there during the Depression. To tell the truth, I never realized — I'm very unobservant — I always had enough money. We weren't “rolling” but I always had enough money so money meant nothing to me. I never noticed if things were difficult.

Q: Did you go into the market and do your own shopping?

WHITE: No. I had a chef and he did the marketing. I had a lady's maid, a butler, a chambermaid; and of course the chef had an assistant. I think we probably had a gardener, and we of course had a chauffeur who doubled as doorman when we had company. I must remember to say that when we entertained, there was always a bowl out, people would always give a tip for the servants. Some people didn't allow it but it was the custom.

Q: It still was when we went to Holland in 1958.

WHITE: There, I was told, you put it under the plate? And in Argentina, it wasn't the custom. Our Czech servant, we discovered, had put out a bowl, so we had to tell him it was not the custom. We took the Czech servant and his wife with us to Berlin, and it was not a good idea. I don't think it's ever good to take good people from one place to the other. Anyway some people manage but we had a general blowup.

Q: My husband always felt that was true, that it was unwise to transport servants from one post to another. Can you describe the house?

WHITE: You came in, there was a little staircase, then there was what they called the treppenhaus, where the staircase went up — they call it “the house for the staircase.” On the right was a big room with dark green damask walls an(after a pause) I don't know what to call the wood; I'm not good at describing furniture; perhaps it was oak, it may have been walnut. It wasn't polished but it was carved here and there, and there was a rail and a cornice. It was a handsome room. Then there was a corner room which had once had

tapestry and white paneling. I got a decorator who put some sort of pink material in — I couldn't afford tapestry or damask — but it made it a nice light morning room. That was right on the garden. There was a dining room. The bedrooms were upstairs. It was a very nice house. It had very elaborate gold faucets which they had left behind, and at one time they said they wanted them back again. I said “They came with the house” and I didn't see why I should send them to England. I'm afraid we refused.

I went back to the U.S. and brought my child over and also picked out the furniture to go in the house. You see, just then we had sold the Crescent Place house, so I went through and picked out what furniture would fit in the Berlin house. Then I had a sort of nervous exhaustion and had to rest for a while, and the furniture arrived while I was away. My husband hadn't put it where I'd envisioned it but he did rather better. (she laughs) He didn't bother with domestic things much, but whatever he did was right.

When we first arrived, we were guests of the Orme Wilsons. He'd come from the U.S. Embassy in Argentina, had been installed in Berlin for a year, and they had a very nice house on the Drakestrass— “drake,” it means. As I recall Jack got there first. The moment I arrived, Mrs. Wilson went back tAmerica to see her mother who was old and had broken a hip. There was a big party and I was just a guest, but the Greek Minister came up to me and said, “Your husband says he doesn't play bridge.” I said, “Doesn't play bridge? Oh, you're thinking of Mr. Wilson. I'm not his wife but I'm living with him.” (both laugh) Then I realizefrom his expression what I'd said.

Q: So part of the furniture from Crescent Place went to Berlin?

WHITE: The rest was put in storage.

Q: Did that furniture go with you for the rest of your career?

WHITE: No, we sent it home. From Berlin we went to Calcutta. There we got a big house too. I took the overstuffed furniture there but not any of the handsome things. An amusing

thing: in Argentina I'd had a cabinet made big enough to hold my sheet music, which is out-size. It's a very handsome piece, made of macassar, very Modern in line. It went in beautifully with the Louis XVI straight furniture, too. My German brother-in-law, who was very artistic and a great tease, said, “How well they go together. I must get 'Modern'.” Or something like that — I thought he was teasing me but he really meant it, for later on we found that he'd put Modern in his schloss, Dobrau, in Upper Silesia, the part that was awarded to Germany after World War I. Upper Silesia was cut in two, part went to Poland, part went tGermany — really, it was like Caesar's Gaul, “in three parts”, a third part went to Czechoslovakia. (Later, in World War II, the Russians came in and took it, and when the Germans made a counterattack, the Russians set fire to my brother-in-law's house, which was on a huge estate way out in the country, which had not been broken up.) His father died in 1921 while they were waiting to have a plebiscite, and so the law permitting an entailed estate, what they called the majorat was still in force. In other parts, in republican Germany, the big estates were split up. So his big estate was still there.

Q: I thought I knew a little bit about your family history but who iyour German brother-in-law?

WHITE: He married my husband's sister, Muriel White. Count Seherr-Thoss was, as long as his father lived, Count Hermann and all his brothers were likewise Count plus their first names. So we used to go down and spend Christmas with them, and the uncles would come. There was always a question of money because he had to support his brothers. Then there would be the big shoots when people came and spent two weeks — a shoot is a marvelous performance. The landowner would have “beaters” come, who would beat the game into a circle. The “guns” would stand a certain distance from one another, each one wita “loader” behind. One would fire, then the next man, and the next. They'd shoot at everything. Hares, pheasants, foxes, everything was laid in rows according to kind in front of each “gun”. The landowner would give one pheasant, and the market cart was right there and the rest was taken to market. Of course, he'd been feeding the birds, he had to

pay the beaters, he had to do all the entertaining. It was only fair that he got something back from it.

Q: Getting back to Berlin, when and how did you meet Adolf Hitler?

WHITE: Oh. Because the Ambassador was away and Jack was charg# d'affaires. We arrived in December of 1933, Hitler had come in the preceding January, so he'd been in power for nearly 12 months. The very night after our arrival we attended a big concert in the Sportspalast, a tremendous place, as big as one of our armories. It was filled with people sitting down. Then the procession entered, the klieg lights swept onto it, and at the very end of the procession Hitler walked in alone with everyone shouting to him, “HEIL HITLER!” That was in December.

Baron von Neurath was Foreign Minister. As I said earlier, all the nobility had come in from all parts of Germany to celebrate, because they thought Hitler would — my sister-in-law told me, “Oh, yes, he's going to bring ... “ I said, “I cannot believe that anybody who walked in alone with all the klieg lights on him would let someone else walk behind him.” (she laughs) That was my one comment. There was a big party, everyone was sayin(imitating gushing manner and voice) “Oh, my dear, I'so glad to see you, for 25 years you haven't changed at all. Now, tell me, what do you do about the Winterhilfe?” Winterhilfe was the welfare that the Nazis had established. Before Hitler, the big estates would look after their own people. Now, they wondered, what's going to happen? Is Hitler going to take over properly or not?

It was ironic: the next night Hitler raided the Stahlhelm, which was the upper class group that believed they were going to restore the Kaiser. He came into their building on the Tiergartenstrasse, where they were having dinner. The stories were that the raiders tore the women's dresses; it was very rough. That ended the Stahlhelm organization.

Q: Was this the Sturm Abteilung group — the “Brown Shirts”?

WHITE: I think it was; I don't think the SS, the “Storm Troopers”, were so predominant at that moment. Then [Ernst] Roehm, who headed the Brown Shirts, took over the Tiergartenstrasse building. [William L. Shirer writes in The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: “Such was the weird assortment of misfits who founded National Socialism, who unknowingly began to shape a movement which in thirteen years would sweep the country, the strongest in Europe, and bring to Germany its Third Reich ... the homosexual Roehm [who brought] the support of the Army and the war veterans.] I don't think any of the nobility were killed, just roughed up; and then they all went home. The leading citizens of Berlin, the ones with the beautiful houses, were the Jews — cultivated people, attractive, artistic, wonderful collectors. They were very, very cosmopolitan, charming people. There were still a few left when we were there. And of course there were all degrees all the way down. We met some of them. There was one man named Preuss. We saw him a certain amount, in the beginning. Then we heard that he had disappeared. Still later that his ashes had been sent back to his wife.

But we didn't know too many of the Berlin Jewish. There was one living on the next street to ours. We went to a very large party there. (Actually, a large number of them turned up in Haiti when we were there in 1942 or 43. Apparently they were able to get passports from the Legatiosaying they were citizens. Then later on, when things got very bad, finally the Haitians weren't taking any more, and the U.S. no longer recognized those passports, so they were stuck in Haiti).

Later we'd moved into our Berlin house with a little bit of furniture and I came over with our child and a governess and my mother. I remember we had the usual social life. They had a wonderful system in Germany. You know, you always had to call on people soon after meeting them. We'd go around in the car, leave cards, and then they'd come; that was the idea. We were simply thrilled with the German system. Immediately after they met us they would mail us their cards, which was wonderful because it gave us all their proper titles, address, and so on. You always address people with their title. I was, for

instance, Frau Botschaftsrat, “Mrs. Counselor,” Botschaft meaning the Embassy and rat meanincounselor.

Of course, they were so appallingly punctual. Having come from Argentin(Fenzi laughs in recognition) where you wouldn't think of arriving earlier than half an hour late, sometimes people were later than that, here they would walk up and down in front of the house and push the bell on the dot. Which was very fortunate for me on one occasion because I had finally agreed — somebody had said “you really ought to have a social secretary.” I didn't know how to handle one but I agreed I'd have one. Well, I thought it would be simpler to have two parties two days running — I could use the same flowers, use all the same fixings. The first party was for couples, the second for ladies only. I was a little late returning to the house and was just rushing in, and here was a lady walking up and down in front of my house. I suddenly realized this was the day for the married couples — she was without a husband. “When does your husband get back?” I asked. “He just got back this morning.” “Oh, if I had only known!” Liar! At any rate, we put a place in and I introduced everybody and explained that her husband had been away and so forth. Then of course we didn't have her for the next party. That was the end of my social secretary. (both laugh heartily)

Q: Better to handle it yourself.

WHITE: You asked how I came to know Hitler. I saw him that time at the Sportspalast. Then our Ambassador went on home leave and Jack became charg# d'affaires. When Hitler had his first dinner as Chancellor he asked Jack, asked us both. As you remember, in diplomatic circles the host sits in the middle of the table and couples opposite each other. Small fry were down at the far ends. I got to know the Belgian wife of the Haitian Minister. He was as white as could be, she was white. They were very pleasant. I don't remember their names. And she asked, “What color are Hitler's eyes?” I said, “Well, he kissed my hand and then pushed it out of the way like a political handshake. I didn't notice.”

After the dinner, we went into another room and he seated the ladies. Then he sent for the Ambassadors. So the small fry were timing how long he stayed and talked with each one. And he only talked with about three of them, and then the party was over. So we all filed off, saying good bye. I was so intent on looking at Hitler's eyes that I completely forgot where I was. I said, “Good night,” looking at his eyes, which were a beautiful blue-green, green-blue, not quite as dark as robin's egg, not quite so green. You know, with most of us the irises are puckered and they catch the light. His didn't seem to be so puckered. That was what was so extraordinary. I got an effect just of blue-green, like china. And when I said, in English, “Good night,” I was aware of a look of fury. But as I was not looking into his eyes, it didn't touch me. Jack said when he went with the Ambassador for New Year's Day, that he said “Good night and Happy New Year” to Hitler in English and got the same look of fury.

We were there for all of '34 and most of '35. We were of course very good friends with our English opposite numbers, a man named Kirkpatrick particularly. He was telling us one day that the English had brought over a colonel, or was he a general, who had been in the same battle that Hitler had been in — he was just a messenger-corporal then, the other a colonel — but they talked a long, long time.

We were invited by Admiral [Karl] Doenitz [Commander of submarines. Only at Nuremberg did he reveal that a German U-Boat had sunk the British liner Athenia ten hours after Britain's declaration of war. Twenty-eight American lives were lost.] to lunch one time. I was on the left. Jack was on the right and the French Ambassador was on the left, which bothered me terribly; but that apparently was military custom — the lady of the house walked in on the arm of the guest of honor — and sat down with him on her left. I think some of the English did that too, a military custom. Not our system of putting the lady down, then walking around and sitting on the other side; then the person who should be sitting on the left has to go way off somewhere else in order to get into his seat.

My mother came over and of course we took drives around Berlin. Friday June 29, there was terrible traffic on the Tiergartenstrasse, which seemed to be controlled by Goering's Luftwaffe, which I couldn't quite understand. But they let us througThe next day, when we came home, on Saturday, they wouldn't allow us up the street. So we went around and came along the bank of the canal, the Ufer, and came in on Hildebrandstrasse to No. 22; we came in from the other end. It was a private street just one block long. The Embassy was on Bendlerstrasse. That I think was nearly two blocks — I'm a little bit vague about where there's one block and the Stahlhelm was two blocks, but they were all big private houses taken over on the Tiergartenstrasse.

So Jack waunaware — he had just walked back the block or two — and when I told him that we weren't allowed to go, he called up a journalist and asked “What's going on?” “Oh,” he was told, “Hitler's killed Roehm, and Goering has taken over the Stahlhelm Building, now it's the “Goering”. That was why nobody was allowed on the street. So, we had lunch. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson were there and their son, who was about 12 or 13, and his great friend was there too, Russell Train, long since the World Wildlife man. So they came to lunch and it was oh, a terribly hot day. The Germans have a wonderful word for it: schwueh[she strings out the long vowel sound] — a hot, muggy day. I had been asked to play tennis by Fraulein Sarre, whom I'd just met, I don't recall her first name, that week. She'd invited me to come out and play. They had a place in Neubabelsberg, so I got into the car, with a chauffeur. It took us some time to find the place in one of Berlin's suburbs.

I finally found it, and here were the other guests, with long faces talking, about 1792. So I said, “I hear that Hitler has shot Roehm.” They looked at me as though I were an idiot, and I thought perhaps I'd said something I shouldn't have said, so I said nothing more. They went on talking, and it seemed the Sarres were great friends with the von Schleichers and they'd seen him at 12:30. At one o'clock, the SS people had climbed the wall and shot both General and Mrs. von Schleicher in their house. So no wonder they had long faces and were talking about 1792, the French Revolution.

Well, I was late so we went down to play tennis; as I said it was very hot. I had a partner, I can't remember, I think he was a Count, his mother was Jewish; his sister was Mrs. Victor Horstmann. She wrote a booafterwards called “We Chose to Stay.” At all events he was my partner, I forget who the others were. Suddenly while we were playing, down the hill to the tennis court came Frau Sarre saying, “It's absolutely true, I just heard it on the Czech radio that Hitler told Roehm to commit suicide, and he said, 'If you want me dead, you must shoot me yourself'. So he shot him and his boy friend and ... “ So my partner — middle of the game, midway through a set — put his racket in the case and said, “I haven't said anything, I don't know anything. I'm going to consult my business partner.” And left. Well, I didn't see him for a year or more and then he told me that the reason why he was agitated, why he hadn't believed me the first time, was that von Schleicher was on the right and Roehm was on the left but that everybody was waiting for von Hindenburg to die. And Hitler didn't wait. When he struck both ways, my ex-tennis partner said his business partner was in a group in the center and he wanted to consult him to see what they should do. They decided he should go on as normal.

Q: Even after Hitler had killed both the left and the right?

WHITE: Yes. Well, the next day was Sunday. We'd been invited by some charming Jews — he'd been president of the Dresdner Bank, one of these blue-eyed blond red-haired Germans, they're very distinguished, these German Jews — to tea. They lived on the Wannsee Lake. And again we ...

(End Side, A Tape IV; Begin Side B, Tape IV)

We had trouble finding the house, which was on a peninsula jutting out into the lake. The lake was white with sailboats; “standing room only.” How they navigated I don't know. Everybody was being so “normal,” and as somebody also said, probably they felt they wouldn't be bugged out on the lake, where anything could [be] heard perfectly well from boat to boat. But when I got to the gate, a man came — as I say it was warm, not quite

as hot as the day before — a little man in civilian clothes with an overcoat halfway down below his knees. I explained that I was Mrs. White and was invited to tea, so he handed me a letter from my host saying he was very sorry that he couldn't have me for tea that day, that he was under house arrest but he was being treated very well, and would I please give back the letter.

Well, I hadn't thought of keeping the letter until then, but then of course I realized it had to be given back. The little man turned around and left. When I saw my tennis partner, as I said a year later, he said that his partner had been at the dinner that my host had given and the host was arrested because he was on General von Schleicher's dinner list. But they didn't get the partner.

There was a dinner we were invited to that the Goebbels gave. Goebbels was charming, as was his wife. Hitler was there, and again he kissed my hand — kissed his thumb holding my hand. He greeted everybody, then Goebbels put him at a table with movie stars (Germans) and put all the “dips” together. Goebbels being the Propaganda Minister. The French Ambassador was furious. “Why did he ask us here if he's not going to give us our proper rank?” Another time we were invited to dinner by Goering but that was a very small affair out in, I think, his hunting lodge. He was very stout, so was his wife.

Q: What were your conversations like at those dinners? You must all have been so careful about expressing your thoughts.

WHITE: Well, I don't know that I ever tried to express my thoughts. One just did “small talk.” Light conversation. Oh, there was a time, yes, when we invited Putsi Hanfstaengl — his father had a big picture gallery in New York and married an American. They always called the son Putsi. He went to Oxford. He played the piano beautifully. He was “in” with Hitler and used to play for him. We asked him to play but at this time he was falling out of favor and I'm afraid he drank a great deal. We had him just for ourselves and he played the piano for some of the time. In his rather drunken way he said, “Hitler's a very religious

man.” I said, “I'm sure he is, because the best way to fill the church is to persecute it.” (she laughs) He realized it was something different but he was too far gone to make out what it really was all about.

We also met the Crown Princess Cecilie, the widow of the Crown Prince. She still had a little court, her own group of friends, and she had a lady-in-waiting, whom I liked very much. The latter explained that if you don't want to curtsey, at least you must bow when you shake hands, and you always use the third person. “Their Imperial Highnesses. Would Their Imperial Highnesses like to do this?” I think you had to say it in the plural but Muriel told me you said it once and after that you didn't have to. She was very nice about it. I told her that I'd met her in Argentina and she said, “Oh, you know, I'd always heard how well-dressed they were but they all looked exactly alike.” What amused me when I was in Buenos Aires, they were all so excited at meeting a royal princess and when they saw her, “Oh, so badly dressed!” (she repeats it in Spanish) (both laugh)

I came back to Berlin after I'd been in India and saw a lady I recognized. I couldn't remember who she was. I went up to her and pumped her hand and said “So glad to see you again.” Then I saw my friend, the lady-in-waiting come sailing in, who took me by the hand and led me off without stopping — it was well done. I'd forgotten who it was! (hearty laughter)

Q: There was a little note in some literature you gave me saying that when your mother came over — it must have been when she came over with Margaret in 1934 — that in spite of all the political upheaval, you and your mother traveled around Germany.

WHITE: On Monday, July 1, mother and I got into my car — I had a runabout with a seat that opened up from the trunk, a rumble seat where Margaret sat, she was 12, and we started off. We drove all over Germany, the three of us, no chauffeur. We did have Corps Diplomatique license plates. The people in the villages, who didn't know what it was, joked that it stood fo(she laughs) some kind of toothpaste.

There waa Brown Shirt who thumbed a ride. I thought Margaret had been out in the sun long enough, I'd bring her back in, and let him go in the back. Margaret was not at all pleased. So I just took him to the next village and he got out and thanked me. That was the only incident on the whole trip. Somebody had called up from America to the Embassy to ask whether he should have his family return home. Jack said, “I can't advise you on that point, it's up to you. I can only tell you that my family have gone and started off by themselves ... “

Q: “My mother-in-law, my wife and my daughter are traveling the country.” And Margaret went to school there and mentioned having to do her “Heil Hitler!” at school with all her classmates.

WHITE: Oh yes, they all had to do that.

Q: How wise I think your husband was to tell her “go ahead and do it, that's what's expected, but don't believe a word of it.”

WHITE: Well, she had a similar situation in Buenos Aires. When she came home one day I realized something was wrong. It finally came out. I said, “What has happened?” And she burst into tears. “It was the flag! It fell down!” At last it was clear. Apparently it was a great honor to put the Argentine flag in the corner, and finally it was her turn to do it. As she did it, in turning around she apparently knocked it somehow so that it fell down. And she didn't think she could go back to school the next day. I said, “Well, we don't run away from things, and you'll find if you go back they won't think anything of it.” But then Jack discovered that she was doing the pledge of allegiance to Argentina every da(laughing heartily), so then he explained that that wasn't for us to do.

In Berlin it was Fraulein Mommsen's school and I had once studied “Mommsen's History of Rome” when I was a child, so her name rang a bell for me. She was a good teacher of the old kind, you see. And she kept up for — I think the year after we left they closed the

school because it wasn't especially Nazi. Did Margaret tell you about the trouble with the girl who was stealing things? Well, Margaret came home one time in great excitement. It seems that somebody had been taking money out of purses. The way they went about it was apparently not very good. She said, “I don't like this school. They have no discipline.” I said, “What do you mean?” “No, they don't tell you what you must do and what you mustn't do. They wait till you do something and then they yell at you. That's not discipline!” Which was right, it was regimentation.

Q: Then the other interesting thing is that you left her in Germany when you went to India.

WHITE: Well, we were going to India. She hadn't quite finished her school year. So we got thgoverness to go around and get herself a small apartment, where Margaret stayed in Berlin; then they went down to Rome for the Easter vacation, and Margaret came back to the U.S. and stayed with my mother. So she was alone with the governess for just a month or two, long enough to finish her school year.

It was in the spring of '36 when Hitler went into the Saar. Margaret wrote very enthusiastically about it, so I decided that the governess's German boy friend was in favor of it. I met him, he was half Polish, he was much lighter than the average German. He was studying social science and she was learning typing, that's how they met. I realized that she was getting interested — she began looking into her genealogy, because her mother was a Miss Nussbaum. Was that Jewish or wasn't it? So she wrote back home and they told her if it was a Nussbaumer it would have been, but if it was Nussbaum it was all right. She brought Margaret over and went back and married him. She had quite a career in the war and so did he, but that's another story. An interesting one. (Fenzi encourages her to tell it)

Q: You've obviously kept in touch with her.

WHITE: Oh yes, I've kept in touch with her, Miquette Marchand. She was a very good friend to the American wife of the South African Counselor. She was French Swiss but

had been in America when quite young, only 23. She was with us all the time we were in Argentina and all the time in Berlin. She said she would never be governess for anybody else. Margaret was like her child. They've always kept up. She died only last year (1988). They finally came over to Georgia.

But to go back: They got married and had a little girl named Dunja, with black hair and black eyes. A South African lady, when she left Berlin, left all her stores with Miquette, so she was able to carry on. It was difficult for her because of her German, which she spoke not too correctly, with a very strong French accent, so they often thought she was a spy. But she had an apartment on the sixth floor near the Potsdamer Platz. Whenever there was an air raid they had to go down to the basement. She kept a little suitcase ready to take down there. This particular time she'd gone to visit a friend, and it rained. Her friend said, “Wait a minute, I'm sure it's going to stop.” And Miquette [sic] said, “Oh, we've got to go because I'll have to go down to the basement.” They were having raids regularly in Berlin. When she reached home, they were just going down into the shelter. She said, “Oh, do let me go up and get my bag?” “No, go down to the shelter.” So she went down, and that time they had a direct hit. Now they had to get up to the roof to put the fire out. She said, “It's hopeless, please let me get my bag.” “No. We've got to put the fires out.” She fell and scraped her leg terribly, it hurt badly, but she had her little child always with her so as to be sure not to lose her.

She eventually had to go to a hospital. They wouldn't give her any anesthesi“because that's for our brave soldiers.” The leg had been scraped to the bone, I think it probably got infected. She wouldn't take any sleeping pills because she was so afraid the child would be lost. Finally, they must have given her something because she fell asleep. And when she woke up the child was gone. It just happened that the husband, who was on the Russian front, had come — he'd asked for leave for the weekend because, he said “They're having a lot of bombing in my part of Berlin and there's nothing going on here — will you let me go?” And his officer let him come back.

He came back and found his house in ruins. “Where are the people?” Oh, some went to one hospital, some to another. He went to the one nearest by and found his wife — with no child. The first thing he had to do was to look for the child. It seems they were just about to evacuate children. Because she had black eyes and black hair, they gave her to a Japanese lady to take care o(she laughs) because her mother wasn't there. When he got there he asked, “Has anybody seen a child named Dunja?” “Oh, ja, Dunja! She's with a Japanese lady.” The child recognized him, they were glad to see each other. And he was able to take the child away and bring her back. If she had been “Gretchen,” they never would have recovered her. But because of the unusual name, Dunja, they remembered it.

So he brought the child back and was able to get his wife into a convalescent home. Eventually he arranged for her to go further out of town. And then he had to go back to his unit. When he returned, he found his whole unit had been wiped out.

Q: What a tale!

WHITE: And then of course the Russians came and he was taken prisoner. He said they were walked in rows of 12. They kept counting them and if one of them fell and died, they would stop and take a peasant and put him in so as to have 12 always in the line. On they went, without food and water as far as I can make out. He managed to get on the end, always hoping to be able to escape. One of his guards who could speak a little German asked him what his name was. He said it was “Sobczynski,” sob-chin-ski. And the guard said, “Ah, guter man! You get out.” And he let him go.

He knew that the person he was really talking about was a man also with a Polish name who was a doctor who was a good man. But the German didn't know the difference between one Polish and another and he let Victor go free. Somehow or other he got back and was able to get away. It's quite a saga.

Q: Those are the main things I wanted to ask about Berlin. What about talking now a little bit about the White place on Crescent Place? You said you lived there in 1927?

WHITE: Yes. We got back from Riga in January of that year and we stayed with my mother at first because we all had flu except my husband. We were on the ship “President Harding,” an unlucky ship. It had a list, it was leaning way over. After a while, oil began appearing in the bathtub, the lights began getting dim. We ran into a tremendous storm, so we made four miles (not four miles an hour) I think we just barely were able to go down the waves diagonally. Jack usually always walks around and around but it was cold and disagreeable. The only place there was light was in the salon, the front living room. Everybody congregated there and a lot of people who'd caught the flu in Paris came in and passed it around.

At first the staff came in and said we mustn't use the water in the private bathrooms. Then very soon they stopped the public ones. We finally came to a standstill off the coast of Labrador. By now the wind had abated but it was still terribly gray and cold. There we stayed. There were some boats around us and apparently they were negotiating for oil. Meanwhile, the sailors were chopping up the hatches and going on down chopping up anything for the fires to keep the radio going. Fortunately it was a moonlit night, full moon, and they loaded the ships with drums of oil and we crept into Halifax. They wanted all of us to sign that everything was perfect. I don't think we di(laughing) — I don't know what Jack did.

But we didn't send a telegram to state what had happened. We assumed that that had been done. Then they filled us up with oil, but we still had a list. But with calm weather we got to New York. It was normally a ten-day journey but it took 16 days. The ship told the family “it's coming in tomorrow” and kept on “tomorrow” “tomorrow” and the family got more and more worried. We should have telephoned but I never thought of it.

So we stayed with mother in her apartment iNew York. All three of us and the nurse had bad flu. That year Mother was living in a rented apartment — she was very small, always had small things around her. And here were these great big damask chairs big enough for a man's club, so unsuitable for mother. But she was in the process of fixing over her own apartment, which she moved into that fall. In the meantime I went down to Washington, got a decorator to fix up the house there at 2139 R Street. The furniture that the lady who had rented the house — she was a Mrs. Frothingham whose husband at that time, in '27, was one of the congressmen from Massachusetts — I think it was Frothingham. We were taking the house back from her, you see, and she said, “What you see is my furniture.” I rented the house to her when it had all the lovely blue and white damask and real Louis XIV chairs.

When I came back, here was gilt cane furniture. It seems that the house had been furnished from Crescent Place by the butler. And then when they had rented the house, and Mr. and Mrs. White were coming down again, he took it all back and went down to an auction and bought some gilt furniture to replace it! Mrs. Frothingham said she couldn't possibly have lived with that furniture and went home and got her own needlepoint chairs and made everything very attractive.

Then I said, “Well, I can't live in it either when people know that the house belongs to me.” If I were renting it it was one thing but if they know it belongs, I can't do it either. So I got in a decorator and really they fixed it up very nicely. And then we never lived in it. I think we were there for two or three weeks. Then I rented a house up in Lenox so I could be near Mr. and Mrs. White. He was not well. In fact he died at the end of July.

So then in the fall, we moved into Crescent Place. As I say, we had a difficult situation, because we inherited the butler, Stevens, who was not quite as overwhelming as the average — he was much more human than the average butler but he could be stiff. His wife Blanche was chambermaid. But in the meantime I got a second man who was French, and his wife was a lady's maid. So it was a hopeless situation — that the second man's

wife was superior to the head man's wife, you see. To begin with it didn't work. Then we had another chambermaid. And we had a house man, a gardener and a chauffeur, a cook, kitchen maid and laundress. I went down to the basement one time, spotlessly clean, there were three gas furnaces, I think, possibly four, it seemed forever — and the meters were going around a mile a minute. I ran away saying, “I can't look at this!” (laughing) So I never went down again.

Stevens was so funny. When I first went down to Washington, I was “Mrs. John” because Mr. Henry White was “Mr. White.” The Whites were not there; we were living there for two or three weeks. I was going to give a party. At luncheons my mother often had black bean soup with lemon in it or with a gob of whipped cream, served in cups. So I said we'd have that. “Of course, Madam, if you give the order, Madam, it'll be done Madam. But if I were you, Madam ... “ I said, “All right, Stevens, we'll have consomm#.” (hearty laughter) So I was a little bit dreading seeing Stevens again. But this time I was “Mrs. White.” And I produced some lace place mats for the luncheon. And he said, “You know, Madam, I've worked for two other Mrs. Whites and this is the first time I've ever been asked to use mats.” My guardian angel came to my rescue. I said, “Stevens, both Mrs. Whites were very fashionable ladies. Don't you think if it had been the fashion to have placemats, they would have had them?” “Madam, I believe you are right.” (laughter)

Q: Wonderful! And you were very young at that point.

WHITE: I was young the first time. I was only 23. But the second time I was about 29. Well then, the table was so wide that we generally put two people at the end, but we could put three. We were giving a dinner party of 28 and this beautiful tablecloth extending the whole length of it — there was enough of everything, you see. I forget what, somebody extra came, so there were three at one end. The dinner was for the French Ambassador, so Jack and I sat in the middle. On the table was the centerpiece that was given to Mr. White when he left as Ambassador to Paris. It was a S#vre hunting scene, white bisque on a

purple-blue service stand. It was really very effective; and the bright blue made the table very pretty.

Jack had Mme. Claudel on the right. So he called attention to the fact that the set was presented to Ambassador White in 1909. “Tiens! I thought it was ours. We've just come from Japan where the boy would always borrow from somebody else and this of course we got from the garde-meubles — it's the decoration they gave to every embassy. Yes, you're right, our dog's tail is broken and yours is still intact.” (laughter)

Q: How wonderful! I love that very, very fragile fluted crystal. There's a place setting on display — beautiful.

WHITE: I think that must have been Baccarat, I don't know. The plates were Crown Derby. Actually, we have three kinds of Crown Derby — some marked with a very small crown, some with a large crown, and some with David Bloor. He took over the factory at the end, and he often sold pieces that Crown Derby had rejected, so the David Bloor has not got the value that the “real” Crown Derby has. But I decided to let them have the Bloor. I've used that set in New York when we gave big dinners, and people would always turn pieces over and it was always the David Bloor instead of the Crown Derby. But a lot of the real pieces had been broken and clamped together. We use the fluted crystal. We used to give dinners of 18 in New York, which was all the dining room would hold. The living room only held 16. We finally got down to 17 finger bowl(she laughs). I didn't bring a finger bowl to the exhibit because you don't start with them.

Q: On another topic, there's a lovely photograph of your father-in-law in costume for a ball. Where was that?

WHITE: That was the famous ball given by the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. I think it must have been in — anyhow, in the 1880s. They dressed as Medici. She was very handsome. She's rather thin in the picture, so it might have been 1882. My husband was born in '84; it was said she put on weight after that time. The American Minister was

James Russell Lowell, the poet, who said, “I'm sorry to hear she's put on weight but the more of her, the better.”

Q: Did yomeet John Russell Pope, the architect, when you were at Crescent Place the first time? Did you ever meet him? I admire his work very much.

WHITE: I never met him. You can always recognize his work, it's always classical. He did the Duke house on 78th Street and Fifth Avenue in New York, which now belongs to New York University, used for their Fine Arts department, I think. His scale is enormous — superhuman — but the proportions are very, very good. When I went back, [to the Washington house] I thought, “Good gracious,” (laughing) “this really is tremendous.”

Q: Looking at the house when it was your responsibility is quite different.

WHITE: I came back from Argentina, later, where they had enormous houses too. My mother was terribly proud of her apartment because it had such high ceilings and the fact that the decorator put in something to bring the ceiling down. I said, “The apartment is lovely but it's much too low.” She said, “Why, it's two feet more than anybody else's!” (laughter)

Q: I do have one question. You mentioned that in Argentina — I guess it was Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss [wife of the Ambassador] who suggested that you go to bed when you were tired, so you went to bed for, what, a few days? And the next year you were teary again, so you went to bed for a week. And then you just mentioned that after getting the furniture and everything together for Berlin, then again you just had to ...

WHITE: Oh, before that I was all ready to go for a month. Actually Miquette, the governess, did most of the packing.

Q: Did you find diplomatic life exhausting at times?

WHITE: Yes. You're always giving out. And that year I was in Washington, I couldn't get beyond the fifth chapter of any book. I was just too taut. I'd come from Riga but the pace in Washington was so much faster. Riga was charming, just living there was delightful.

Q: And then you said one time your husband gave up an opportunity to serve in Paris to go to Riga.

WHITE: They told me that here, I never knew it before. The question was what to do, and when we went to Prague, he didn't think my health was up to Paris.

Q: Adlai Stevenson said the thing about the UN that really exhausted him was the social life. I certainly had experiences like yours when you just really had to give up and nurture your self for a while.

WHITE: You always have to nurture your self. I had a Finnish maid in New York. She was very delicate-boned, delicate in every way, dainty. She did exquisite sewing. I had her in the winter because her lady was in California in winter, and I wanted her to stay one week more. She said, “Oh no.” I said, “But your lady is not coming until then.” “But I have to nourish my soul.” I've never forgotten that. It's true, you do have to. And so, when I went to bed, I'd read and read and read; sleep and read. To fill up again. It's necessary.

Q: It was a demanding profession. It is a demanding profession.

WHITE: Very; it is demanding. Of course now, my son-in-law, Tap Bennett, loves the social life, thrives on it. But the job that did him in was being the liaison between the State Department and Congress. He said, “The congressmen, you never get hold of them.” The hours were impossible. He said he was really glad to retire. He stayed on one extra year to do that. He said he hankered for retirement — he'd gone straight from NATO. Having had this grueling experience he was glad to be out.

Q: I think (laughing) you have to be strong and young to survive in Washington.

WHITE: We noticed that when we retired in Washington. We bought a house on N Street in Georgetown, brought in the furniture, fitting in things we kept with a shoehorn and getting rid of the rest. I couldn't get help. It was very complicated living, for me — I'm not a good housekeeper. And Jack found that people just didn't have time for somebody who was retired. So we moved up to New York — sold the house, bought an apartment, which we bought extremely cheaply because they said the upkeep was so expensive. I'm now paying each month two-thirds of what our yearly upkeep was then. The apartment below us went for $3 million, this year, 1989. I'm going to stay there, I couldn't move out, but by the time I move on, the real estate bottom may have dropped, or it may go back to where it was before, we never can tell. It's an old-fashioned apartment.

Q: I'm sure it's much more in demand than a modern one.

WHITE: That's probably it.

Q: I'm trying to think from the photographs and exhibits in the Crescent Place house ... I thought the photograph on the invitation with the Henderson Castle and the White mansion was lovely.

WHITE: Yes. I miss the Henderson Castle. We invited Mrs. Henderson to Christmas, she was 93. She still danced once a week at the dancing class, ballroom dancing; good exercise. I can't dance any more. My legs don't work very well but I wear rubber-soled shoes, which isn't very helpful. Well, we invited Mrs. Henderson to dinner for Christmas.

(End Tape IV, Side B; Begin Tape V, Side A)

WHITE: (continuing) She (Mrs. Henderson) was ultra-”dry” and didn't approve of alcohol and got rid of it all. The story goes that she poured out all of her husband's wonderful wines on Meridian Hill. So when we had her for Christmas, we had a little plum pudding without anything in it passed to her and the main plum pudding came in blazing in blue

flame. She said, “What's this?” I said, “Oh, that's something that hasn't any alcohol in it, for you.” And she sai(imitating huffy voice) “I never said you couldn't use it for flavoring!”

Q: Did you know her very well? Of course, you were very young ...

WHITE: Age never meant anything to me. When I was in Venezuela, 1921-22, my best friends were both over 60. I've always been with older people, always liked older people. I don't know, I don't think of age. That's why I have great difficulty deciding how old a person is.

Q: I was interested in the exhibit at Crescent Place.

WHITE: They didn't include a photograph of Mrs. White's portrait. I had a tiny one here and I thought they ought to have one — I said “You can get it down at the Corcoran Museum.” I hoped they'd do it. It used to hang over the mantelpiece in the dining room. It was seven feet high, and in our ten-foot ceiling room in New York it would have come right down to the floor. Mr. White's portrait is in the entrance hall — we didn't take that either because it was too big. We gave both portraits to the Corcoran because Mr. White had been on the Board. (They didn't want to take Mr. White's because because the painter was French — an artist named Bonnat, a member of the Academy. It was a very fine portrait but the Corcoran specializes now in American portraits.) My brother says Mrs. White's ought to be in the National Gallery of Art. I went to see it — we only loaned it, to begin with — and Mr. Minnegerode, the curator, took me around.

Q: You sold the Crescent Place house in 1934?

WHITE: Yes. Because we said we'd never live there again. The taxes and upkeep were high. The Meyers bought it that year. The house has only had the two owners. Mrs. White used to dominate that dining room — you know the portrait. I would sit right under it and fee(laughing) so inadequate.

Q: You've been talking for an hour and a half, are you tired?

WHITE: I can't think of anything more to say. I could ... but skipping around.

(at this point they stop for lunch)

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Notes taken immediately following Interview III, July 10, 1989

MRS. WHITE'S FIRST FLIGHT

Herbert Hoover had been elected President in 1928. As a rule, American Presidents did not leave the country while in office, and Hoover wanted to make a trip to Latin America before his inauguration [in March of 1929]. He was sailing down the east coast of South America en route to Argentina. Jack had gone on ahead to Buenos Aires, where he was to be DCM, and I was following with Margaret and the governess, sailing down the west coast of South America. I took an earlier ship so as to get there before the Hoovers, as I didn't think I should arrive in the middle of their visit.

When the ship got to Lima, some Embassy friends came aboard to greet me and urged me to stay over as there was going to be an elegant party a few days later. Earlier one of my table mates on the ship, a German, had warned me that when the weather was rough it was not possible to debark at Mollendo where I was thinking of leaving the ship to take the train over the Andes to Buenos Aires in order to be there for the Hoovers. My friends told me that there was an airline, recently established by Mr Fawcett, which flew from Lima to Mollendo. The airline could get me to Mollendo in time to catch the train for Buenos Aires that would arrive in time for all the official functions for President elect and Mrs. Hoover. I decided to do this and shared my funds with the governess who stayed on the ship with Margaret. It wasn't enough, but the governess had the good sense to wire Jack for more.

Alexander P. Moore was our Ambassador to Peru at the time. He had been ambassador in Spain, where he was accepted, but the Peruvians found him boorish. [Moore was a political appointee. He was in Peru for only a little more than a year. In 1930, Hoover appointed him to Warsaw but he died before taking office.] The party was marvelous. One eccentric older lady was dressed traditionally in the style of the Spanish colonial times. Afterwards I flew on a very small airplane with room for only four passengers to Mollendo with Mr. Fawcett, himself, as pilot. This was my very first time on an airplane. The trip was very exciting. The landscape was absolutely barren, but with the majestic Andes rising abruptly to the East.

We did arrive in Mollendo in time for the train. It went up the Andes to La Paz where we overnighted. There I met an Englishman who was a director of the railroad and was traveling on the same train in his own private car. He invited me to join his group for the rest of the trip to BA. I accepted and the next day had the luxury of a bath in a full size tub on the private train carriage, arriving in Buenos Aires very refreshed.

Well, I did arrive a few hours before the Hoovers, and that evening I was asked to take care of Mrs. Hoover. The President of Argentina at that time was a bachelor, and so there was a stag dinner for Mr. Hoover that evening which Jack attended. Then there was a dinner for Mrs. Hoover, given by the Foreign Minister's wife, who spoke no English, so I was to be Mrs. Hoover's translator. We had just been in Riga for three years, where I had learned to speak Russian, and I had not used my Spanish since we left Caracas five years before. Oh, I had had a few [Spanish lessons] at Berlitz before leaving home, but it wasn't enough. At one point when I was translating, I turned to Mrs. Hoover and said something in perfect Russian. She looked so astonished, I realized immediately what I had done.

Then she asked me to sing, and the only thing I could think of was “I”ve Been Working on the Railroad”. Later I took guitar lessons, and could manage some up-country songs. But

I couldn't manage the tango, my classical training made it impossible, as they come in just after the beat. Besides, the tango was not danced in Argentine society at that time.

Of course, the front page of the newspaper was devoted to the Hoover visit. But there was a small article down in one corner about the American Counselor's wife who had flown over all the Andes.

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BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: John Campbell White

Date entered Service: 1921Left Service: 1945

Posts: 1921Caracas, Venezuela 1923Prague, Czechoslovakia 1924Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia 1927Department of State, Washington, DC 1928Buenos Aires, Argentina 1933Berlin, Germany 1936Calcutta, India 1937Kabul, Afghanistan 1940Tangier, Morocco 1941Port au Prince, Haiti 1944Lima, Peru 1945Retired

Status: Widow of AmbassadorDate and place of birth: 1898; Rye, New York

Maiden Name: Moffa- Descendant of John Jay.

Parents:

R. Burnham Moffat

Ellen Low Pierrepont

Note: Mrs. White is the daughter-in-law of Henry White, Ambassador to Italy (1905-1907) and to France (1906-1909); her husband, John Campbell White, was Ambassador to Haiti (1940-1944) and to Peru (1944-1945). She is the mother-in-law of W. Tapley Bennett,

Ambassador to the Dominican Republic (1964-1966) and to Portugal (1966-1969). Lilla Grew Moffat, daughter of Joseph C. Grew, married Mrs. White's brother, Pierrepont Moffat in 1927 while he was at the White House as the first Protocol Officer for the Department of State. He was later Minister to Canada (1940-1943). Their son, her nephew, (J.P.) Peter Moffat, was Ambassador to Chad (1983-1985). Her brother, Abbot Moffat, was AID Director in Burma.

Schools: Miss Chapin's

Date and place of marriage: New York City; April 9, 1921

Profession: Foreign Service Wife

Children:

Margaret White Bennett (Mrs. W. Tapley Bennett, Jr.)

Positions held in Washington and at post: See White folder

End of interview